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QUEBEC TODAY

The issue for April 1958 will carry a special supplement devoted to the Province of Quebec. The contemporary character and problems of the Province will be discussed in articles by the following distinguished French Canadians: Gérard Bergeron, Charles Bilodeau, Jean-Charles Bonenfant, Abbé Gérard Dion, Pierre Harvey, Jean-Marc Léger, Abbé Arthur Maheux. The supplement will be introduced by Principal F. C. A. Jeanneret of University College, University of Toronto.

LETTERS IN CANADA 1957

The *Quarterly*'s annual survey of Canadian letters will appear in the issue for July 1958.

BELIEF AND DISBELIEF • *M. H. Abrams*

Nominally the current preoccupation with the rôle of belief in literature goes back only some thirty-five years, to the issue as raised by I. A. Richards and debated by T. S. Eliot, Middleton Murry, and the many other critics and philosophers who took up the challenge. In fact Richards' theory is a late stage in a perennial concern about the clash between what poets say and what their readers believe to be true. The problem of belief, in one or another formulation, is no less ancient than criticism, and it has always been argued in terms of "knowledge," "truth," and "reality," which are the cruxes of all philosophical disagreement. In retrospect, there seems greater weight than comfort in T. S. Eliot's weary conclusion that "the problem of belief is very complicated and probably quite insoluble."[1] But a review of the conditions of this endless debate may itself offer some possibility of headway. For we have inherited from the past not only the problem, but the largely unvoiced aims and assumptions which control the way it is posed and answered. To know how we got where we are may help us to decide where we go from here.

It all began, of course, with Plato. Plato's cosmos is the frame for the play of his dialectic, and cosmos and dialectic co-operate to force the consideration of poetry as a rival of philosophy for access to the true and the good, but under conditions—since poetry is an imitation of an imitation of the criterion Ideas—in which it is hopelessly out of the running. And how remarkably acquiescent the interlocutor in *The Republic* is to this management of the question! "Yes," "Quite true," "Just so," "That follows," "I agree." But suppose he had interjected: "Now look here, Socrates. I see your game. You've got me trapped in a set of premisses by which the end is foreordained. But I refuse to consider poetry in a context in which it must aim to do what philosophy can do better. I propose instead that when we consider poetry, we consider it as poetry and not another thing."

If the interlocutor had spoken up in this way, the history of criticism would have been radically different. It seems quite plain now that Aristotle's *Poetics* transferred the discussion to precisely these new grounds, but silently, so that over the centuries Aristotle has been interpreted as refuting or correcting Plato's theory on its own terms. As a consequence literary criticism has been forced into a defensive stance from which it has never entirely recovered. Alone among the major disciplines the theory of literature has been mainly a branch of apologetics; and we shall mistake the emphases of many major critical documents, whether or not they are labelled a Defence of Poetry, if we fail to recognize the degree to which they constituted the rebuttal in a persistent debate. The positions most strongly defended have shifted, to meet the threat from one or another enterprise claiming exclusive access to the kind of truth poetry was supposed to pretend to: philosophy, history, Christian theology and morals, and then, in the seventeenth century, the New Philosophy. But in every age the seemingly positive principles of criticism have been designed for the defence of poetry, and usually, as in the Platonic dialogues, on a terrain selected by the opposition.

Since the eighteenth century the situation has stabilized, for the great and portentous claimant to truth has become, and has remained, science. Consonantly, the defences of poetry have been directed mainly against the pretensions to universal application of scientific standards of language, and against scientific criteria for judging the validity of all claims to knowledge and value. And quite early the circumpressure of a scientific culture gave their characteristic shape to two types of poetic theory which set the conditions under which we still undertake to deal with the problem of belief in literature. The first theory conceives poetry to be a special language whose function is to express and evoke feelings, and which is therefore immune from the criteria of valid reference (and from the claims on our belief) appropriate to the language of science. The second theory conceives a poem to be an autonomous world all its own, and therefore immune from the requirement that it correspond to our knowledge and beliefs about the world revealed by science.

Early in the nineteenth century Jeremy Bentham, heir to the traditional English semantics of scientific language, charged that by the standards of "logical truth" poetic statements are false. "All poetry is misrepresentation." "Indeed, between poetry and truth there is a natural opposition: false morals, fictitious nature."[2] John Stuart Mill, a disciple of Bentham's who became an ardent defender of poetry, although in

terms controlled by the semantics of positivism, defined poetry as "the expression or uttering forth of feeling," and therefore what he called the "logical opposite" of "matter of fact or science." Accordingly, while science "addresses itself to belief" by "presenting a proposition to the understanding," poetry acts by "offering interesting objects of contemplation to the sensibilities"; so that the reader can accept it, without belief, for the sake of its emotional effects. Poetic illusion, he wrote, "consists in extracting from a conception known not to be true . . . the same benefit to the feelings which would be derived from it if it were a reality."[3]

By Matthew Arnold's time religion had become co-defendant with poetry against the attack of positivism; and Arnold, accepting the inevitable demise of the authority of dogmatic religion because it "has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it," transferred its function to poetry because (like Mill) he regarded poetry as emotively efficacious independently of its truth or the reader's belief. For "poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact." And I. A. Richards, who used this pronouncement from "The Study of Poetry" as the epigraph to his *Science and Poetry,* expanded upon it in terms of a more developed form of the positivist semantics he shared with Hobbes, Bentham, and Mill. All language divides into two kinds. On the one side is "scientific statement," whose truth is ultimately a matter of correspondence "with the fact to which it points." On the other side is "emotive utterance," including poetry, which is composed of "pseudo-statements" whose function is not to assert truths but to organize our feelings and attitudes. And since we have learned to free the emotional efficacy of poetry from belief, poetry must take over the function of ordering our emotional life hitherto performed by the pseudo-statements of religion.[4]

In our age, dominated by the odd assumption that all discourse which is not science must be of a single kind, many opponents of positivism fall in with the tendency to conflate religion with poetry in a common opposition to science. But this tactic will not do, whether we hold, with the positivists, that poetry will replace religion because it works without belief, or, with the anti-positivists, that poetry and religion share access to a special kind of non-scientific, though undefinable and highly attenuated, truth. For it is equally unjust to religion to poetize it and to poetry to sanctify it. Religion is patently not science, but no more is it poetry; and it can survive only if granted its own function and processes and claims upon belief. As for poetry, I shall soon maintain that

it depends for its emotional efficacy upon evoking a great number of beliefs. Besides, it must inevitably paralyse our responsiveness and ready delight to approach a poem as a way to salvation—in Richards' words, as "capable of saving us."[5]

There remains the alternative view that poetry is a world *sui generis*, to be experienced and valued on its own terms, independently of its correspondence to reality or of its emotive and moral effects on the reader. This concept also originated as a defensive tactic, this time against the demand that the materials of poetry be limited to the objects and possibilities of the empirical world revealed by the new science. In rebuttal eighteenth-century proponents of the mythical and the marvellous in poetry developed the possibilities of the Renaissance analogy —the most influential new concept in post-classical criticism—between the poet and the Creator. The poet, it was said, emulates God by creating a "second world," which is not an imitation of the real world but a world of its own kind, subject only to its own laws, and exhibiting not the truth of correspondence but only the truth of coherence, or purely internal consistency. "Poetic truth," as Richard Hurd said in 1762, is not the truth to "the known and experienced course of affairs in this world" demanded by Hobbes. For "the poet has a world of his own, where experience has less to do than consistent imagination."[6]

The radical implications of the concept of a poem as an *alter mundus* were exploited most fully in Germany, especially after Baumgarten for the first time set out to construct a philosophy of the fine arts in general, for which he coined the term "aesthetics." In Baumgarten's formulation, the end of a work of art is not to reflect reality, or to foster morality or to yield pleasure; "the aesthetic end is the perfection of sensuous cognition . . . that is, beauty" (*Aesthetica*, § 14). Produced by a poet who is "like a maker or a creator . . . the poem ought to be a sort of world," related to the real world "by analogy." Poetic fiction is "heterocosmic," consisting of things possible in another world than the one we live in, and subject therefore not to the criterion of strict philosophic truth, but only to "heterocosmic truth," or self-consistency and maximum internal coherence.[7] In his *Critique of Judgment* Kant added the corollary ideas that a beautiful work of art is experienced as an end in itself, by an act purely contemplative, disinterested, and free from any reference to desire, will, or the reality and utility of the object.

Now that these discoveries have become so commonplace that they seem the intuitions of common sense, it is easy to derogate the attempts

of aesthetic philosophers to talk about all the arts at once. But the achievement of eighteenth-century aestheticians was immensely important: they made current a set of premisses enabling the defenders of poetry to meet the charges of Plato and his successors, not on grounds that poetry can compete successfully with the philosopher, the scientist, and the moralist, but on grounds that poetry is entirely its own kind of thing, with its own laws, its own reason for being, and its particular mode of excellence. No wonder, then, that in the nineteenth century these ideas were enthusiastically seized upon and deployed (at first mainly on hearsay) by French and English theorists of art for art's sake, in their strenuous counter-attack against the demands for truth, morality, and utility in art by philosophical positivists, literary conservatives, and a society of Philistines. In his inaugural lecture at Oxford, "Poetry for Poetry's Sake," A. C. Bradley stripped this theory of its accumulated irrelevancies about art as a religion and life as a work of art, and gave it a classic statement. The experience of poetry, he says, "is an end in itself," and "its *poetic* value is this intrinsic worth alone." For the nature of poetry

> is to be not a part, nor yet a copy, of the real world . . . but to be a world by itself, independent, complete, autonomous; and to possess it fully you must enter that world, conform to its laws, and ignore for the time the beliefs, aims, and particular conditions which belong to you in the other world of reality.

And since this poetic world is an indissoluble unity of content and form, he decries in criticism "the heresy of the separable substance."[8]

For a lecture delivered more than a half-century ago, this sounds remarkably up-to-date. It should indeed, for its primary assumptions continue to be the grounds of the most familiar contemporary criticism. We assent heartily to Eliot's dictum that poetry is "autotelic" and to be considered "as poetry and not another thing."[9] We affirm with Ransom "the autonomy of the work itself as existing for its own sake,"[10] and conceive the poem as a self-sustaining entity—variously described as "an object in itself" or an "independent poetic structure" (Brooks) or an "icon" (Wimsatt) or "a kind of world or cosmos" (Austin Warren)—although, in accordance with the modern *furor semanticus*, we tend to think of the poetic other-world as a universe of discourse rather than a universe of creatures, setting, and events. And by a tactic reminiscent of A. C. Bradley's "heresy of the separable substance," and of "the heresy of the didactic" decried by a still earlier proponent of art-for-art's

sake, Edgar Allen Poe, we severely proscribe a variety of heresies and fallacies which threaten to violate the independence and integrity of the sovereign poem.

This austere dedication to the poem *per se* has produced an unprecedented and enlightening body of verbal explication. But it threatens also to commit us to the concept of a poem as a floating Laputa, insulated from life and essential human concerns in a way that accords poorly with our experience in reading a great work of literature. Hence, I think, the persistent struggle in recent criticism to save the autonomy of a poem, yet to anchor it again to the world beyond itself and to reengage it with the moral consciousness of the reader. One example is the frequent insistence that a poem is cognitive and yields valid knowledge, although in the final analysis the knowledge a poem yields usually turns out to be co-terminous with the poem itself. While the poem's value "is a cognitive one, it is sufficient," as Allen Tate says, "that here, in the poem, we get knowledge of a whole object."[11] By a procedure which has been a constant corollary of the view that a poem is a world in itself ever since it was expounded by Baumgarten and his contemporaries, the truth of a poem is interpreted to be a truth of inner coherence, and the relation of the poetic world to the real world is conceived to be not a relation of correspondence, but of analogy. Just as A. C. Bradley declared at the beginning of this century that poetry and life "are parallel developments that nowhere meet . . . they are analogues," so John Crowe Ransom's cognitive claim for poetry comes down to the proposal that the structure and texture of a poem remind us by analogy that the world's body is "denser and more refractory" than the "docile and virtuous" world represented by poetry's great opposite, science.[12] And if I read him correctly, W. K. Wimsatt's point about literature as "a form of knowledge" is that poetic truth is inner coherence, and the relation of a poem to the world is one of analogy. In his words, "the dimension of coherence is by various techniques of implication greatly enhanced and thus generates an extra dimension of correspondence to reality, the symbolic or analogical."[13]

We are particularly uneasy today about the pressure of the doctrine of poetic autonomy towards the conclusion of art-for-art; with a rare candour, Allen Tate affirms "that poetry finds its true usefulness in its perfect inutility."[14] The attempt to break out of the sealed verbal world of the poem-as-such is, I think, one cardinal motive for the current insistence that, in all poems which are more than trivially agreeable, the

structure of symbols, images, and meanings is governed by a "theme." In practice this theme frequently turns out to be a moral or philosophical topic which bears a startling likeness to the "moral," or governing proposition, once postulated by the didactic theorists of the Renaissance and Neoclassic ages. The difference is that the modern critic maintains that the theme subsists only in the concrete embodiment of the poem, as an unasserted, non-referential, uncredited, and thoroughly insulated postulation which serves nevertheless to inform the meanings of a poem both with their unity and with their moral "seriousness," "maturity," and "relevance." This existential oddity has been engendered in modern criticism by the double conditions of poetic relevance and poetic autonomy under which it conducts its inquiry into the relations between poetry and life—conditions summarized by W. K. Wimsatt as governing his own essay on "Poetry and Morals": "We inquire . . . about the work so far as it can be considered by itself as a body of meaning. Neither the qualities of the author's mind nor the effects of a poem upon a reader's mind should be confused with the moral quality of the meaning expressed by the poem itself."[15]

I confess that I share something like this divided premiss, as well as its attendant difficulties. It seems to me that our experience in reading literature, when uninhibited by theoretical prepossessions, engages the whole mind, including the complex of common-sense and moral beliefs and values deriving from our experience in this world. Yet I also think it essential to save the basic insight of aesthetic theory since the eighteenth century: that a poem is to be read for its own sake, independently of what it may do to make us better men or better members of society, and that its intrinsic value constitutes its reason for existing as a poem and not as something else. I am also uncomfortably aware that this looks very much like an attempt to have art for art's sake and eat it too.

I would suggest that the apparent antinomy comes from relying too implicitly on aesthetic ideas inherited from a polemical past. The persistently defensive situation of criticism, and its standard procedure of combating charges against poetry by asserting their contraries, has forced it into an either-or, all-or-none choice that breeds dilemmas: either language is scientific or it is purely emotive; either a poem corresponds to this world or it is a self-sufficient world all its own; either all beliefs are relevant to reading poetry, or all beliefs must be suspended. What we obviously need is the ability to make more distinctions and finer

discriminations; and perhaps these will follow if we substitute for concepts developed mainly as polemical weapons a positive view designed specifically for poetic inquiry and analysis.

Suppose, then, that we set out from the observation that a poem is about people. Or a bit more elaborately, that a poem presents one or more persons recognizably like those in this world, but imposes its artistic differences by rendering the characters and their perceptions, thought, and actions so as to enhance their inherent interest and whatever effects the poem undertakes to achieve. This statement is not to be understood as contradicting the other statements, so frequently proposed, that a poem is an emotive use of language, or that a poem constitutes a verbal universe. It is offered merely as an alternative point of critical departure for inquiry into such questions as the rôle of belief in the appreciation of poetry. Furthermore, this point of view is as old as Aristotle's *Poetics*, and will produce no radical novelties. But I think the issue of morality and belief in poetry has been made to seem unnecessarily recondite because of the common tendency to define a poem as a special kind of language, or a special structure of words and meanings, and then to slip in characters and actions quietly through a back door.

I propose also not to begin with sweeping generalizations about "all poetry" or "all art," but to begin with single poetic passages, and to use these, in Wittgenstein's parlance, as "paradigm cases" on which to base such generalizations as they promise to support. Convenient instances to hand are the few examples of poetic statements which have been mooted again and again in discussions of belief, although with little heed to their differences in kind, and usually as illustrations for a foregone conclusion. The examples are: "Beauty is truth"; "Ripeness is all"; "In His will is our peace"; and "Thou best philosopher . . . Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!"

I

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty" is not an assertion by Keats. The Grecian Urn, after remaining obdurately mute under a hail of questions, unexpectedly is represented as uttering this statement near the end of the poem. In discussions of the problem of belief the significance of this obvious fact is often overlooked or minimized. Middleton Murry, for example, although he observes that the speaker is the Urn, goes on immediately to reconstruct the biographical occasion Keats himself had for such a statement, and then (like so many other critics) evolves an

elaborate aesthetico-ontological theory to demonstrate that the statement is philosophically valid, and merits assent.[16] On his side, Richards describes "Beauty is truth" as "the expression of a certain blend of feelings" and asks us to accept such expressions without belief; and T. S. Eliot replies that he would be glad to do so, except that "the statement of Keats" seems to him so obtrusively meaningless that he finds the action impossible.[17]

There is also a second and more important speaker in the poem. The whole of the "Ode," in fact, consists of the utterance of this unnamed character, whose situation and actions we follow as he attends first to the whole, then to the sculptured parts, and again to the whole of the Urn; and who expresses in the process not only his perceptions, but his thoughts and feelings, and thereby discovers to us a quite determinate temperament. By a standard poetic device we accept without disbelief, he attributes to the Urn a statement about beauty and truth which is actually a thought that the Urn evokes in him. How we are to take the statement, therefore, depends not only on its status as an utterance in that place by the particular Urn, but, beyond that, as the penultimate stage, dramatically rendered, in the meditation of the lyric speaker himself.

Obviously the earlier part of the "Ode" by no means gives the Urn a character that would warrant either its profundity or its reliability as a moral philosopher. In the mixed attitudes of the lyric speaker towards the Urn, the playfulness and the pity, which are no less evident than the envy and the admiration, imply a position of superior understanding:

> Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
> Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
> She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss. . . .

The perfection represented on the Urn is the perdurability of the specious present, which escapes the "woe" of our mutable world only by surrendering any chance of consummation, and by trading grieving flesh for marble. The Urn, then, speaks from the limited perspective of a work of Grecian art; and it is from the larger view of this life, with its possibilities and its sorrows, that the lyric speaker has the last word, addressed to the figures on the Urn:

> That is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

The Urn has said, "Only the beautiful exists, and all that exists is beautiful"—but not, the speaker replies, in life, only in that sculptured

Grecian world of noble simplicity where much that humanly matters is sacrificed for an enduring Now.[18]

I entirely agree, then, with Professor Brooks in his explication of the "Ode," that "Beauty is truth" is not meant "to compete with . . . scientific and philosophical generalizations," but is to be considered as a speech "in character" and "dramatically appropriate" to the Urn. I am uneasy, however, about his final reference to "the world-view, or 'philosophy', or 'truth' of the poem as a whole."[19] For the poem as a whole is equally an utterance by a dramatically presented speaker, and none of its statements is proffered as a philosophical generalization of unlimited scope. They are all, therefore, to be apprehended as "in character" and "dramatically appropriate," and, ultimately, for their inherent interest as stages in the evolution of an artistically ordered, hence all the more emotionally effective, experience of a credible human being.

Is an appreciation of the "Ode," then, entirely independent of the reader's beliefs? Surely not. As it evolves, the poem makes constant call on a complex of beliefs which are the product of ordinary human experiences with life, people, love, mutability, age, and art. These subsist not so much in propositional form as in the form of attitudes, propensities, sentiments, and dispositional sets, which stand ready to crystallize into propositional assertions the moment they are radically challenged, whether in the ordinary course of living or in that part of living we call reading poetry. Kant's claim, as I have said, seems valid, that the apprehension of a work of art, as opposed to our ordinary cognitive and practical concerns, is properly contemplative, disinterested, and free from will and desire, and that the function of presentative art is not to persuade us to beliefs or actions, but to be a terminal good. But here is where we need to make an essential discrimination. These predications apply in so far as we are concerned to make a general distinction between poetic and non-poetic experience, and to separate specifically poetic values from effects beyond the apprehension of the work itself. But when applied to our apprehension of what goes on *inside* a particular poem, they seem to me, as often interpreted, not merely misleading, but directly contrary to aesthetic experience. If the poem affects us at all, our appreciation of the matters it presents is not aloofly contemplative, but actively engaged. We are not disinterested but deeply concerned with the characters and what they say and do, and we are interested in a fashion that brings into play our entire moral economy and expresses

itself continuously in attitudes of approval or disapproval, sympathy or antipathy. And though the poet is not concerned to persuade us to take up positions beyond the poem, it is his constant concern to persuade us to go along with the common-sense and moral positions presupposed by the poem, to take the serious seriously and the comic comically, and to acquiesce in the probability of the thoughts, choices, and actions which are represented to follow from a given character. All these results, however distinguishable from our responses in practical life, depend in great part on beliefs and dispositions which we bring to the poem from life; and these operate not as antagonists to our aesthetic responses, but as the necessary conditions for them, and therefore as constitutive elements in our appreciation of the poem as a poem. Given a truly impassive reader, all his beliefs suspended or anaesthetized, the poet would be as helpless in his attempt to endow his work with interest and power as though he had to write for an audience from Mars.

So with Keats's "Ode." We accept without disbelief the initial situation of the speaker contemplating an Urn, and we devote ourselves delightedly to the rich texture and music of his speech. But if what follows is to be entirely effective, we must take the lyric speaker's emotional problem seriously, as possessing dignity and importance according to the criteria of ordinary experience. By the same criteria, we must find the speaker himself credible and winning—sensitive, intelligent, warm, yet (unlike many of the profoundly solemn commentators on his utterances) able to meditate on the woes of this life and the limitations of art with philosophic lucidity and a very lively sense of the irony of the human situation, and even of the humour of his dialogue with an Urn. Above all, we must so recognize ourselves and our lot in him as to consent imaginatively to his experience until it is resolved, in both artistic and human terms, in a way that is formally complete, hence beautiful, and intellectually and emotionally satisfying.

II

Whatever the case may be with the lyric, it had always seemed obvious that the words of a drama constituted speeches by determinate characters until several decades ago, when by a notable stratagem we critics succeeded in dehumanizing even Shakespeare's tragedies by converting them into a web of thematic imagery. But I am bound by my critical

premiss to take "Ripeness is all" in the old-fashioned way, as a statement by a person in a given situation rather than as a moment in the dialectic of a vegetational symbol.

The statement is Edgar's, and it is not uttered in philosophical humour as a summary philosophy of life but impatiently, for an urgently practical purpose, at a desperate moment in the action. The battle has been lost, Lear and Cordelia captured, and Edgar must rally his blind father from a recurrence of his suicidal impulse, in the hopeless decision to bide and be captured:

> EDGAR: Give me thy hand! Come on!
> GLOUCESTER: No further, sir. A man may rot even here.
> EDGAR: What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
> Their going hence, even as their coming hither;
> Ripeness is all. Come on.

The question of our giving or withholding assent to this statement, taken as a universal philosophic predication, arises only when we pull it out of Shakespeare's context and place it in the artificial context of our own discussion of the problem of belief. In its original place we respond to the speech, in the perfection of its phrasing, as following from Edgar's character, appropriate both to the bitter events preceding and to the exigency of the moment, and also, it should be noted, as furthering the action of people whose fortunes we strongly favour.

A wide-spread opinion about Shakespeare's objectivity seems to place all his characters outside the purview of our moral beliefs and judgments. It derives ultimately from Kant's concept of disinterested aesthetic contemplation, came to England by way of Coleridge and Hazlitt, and received its best-known statement in Keats's comment on Shakespeare's "negative capability," and his assertion that the poetical character "has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the camelion poet," for whom all ends "in speculation."[20] Rightly understood, the concept is valid and important. We apprehend Shakespeare's villains with a purity and fullness of appreciation possible only in art, where we see the characters from within and independently of the practical effects on us of their being what they are. But the aesthetic attitude, though different from the practical attitude, is not so different as all that. We may take as great delight in Shakespeare's villain as in his hero, but we remain aware that the villain is a villain and the hero a hero. *King Lear*, for example, presents a conflict of characters in which the author must make us take sides; and he is able to do so only by presupposing that we bring to the work

deep-rooted moral beliefs and values which will cause us instinctively to attach our good will to some characters and ill will to others, and therefore to respond appropriately to their changing fortunes with hope and disappointment, delight and sadness, pity and terror.

Like all the greatest poets Shakespeare pays the human race the compliment of assuming that it is, in its central moral consciousness, sound. So from the opening words of the play we are invited to accept without disbelief the existence of King Lear and his three daughters, but to believe, and never for a moment to doubt—however the violence of circumstance may shake the assurance of this or that character in the play—that a king, while regal, ought to possess human understanding, moral penetration, and a modicum of humility, and that daughters should be loyal, kindly, and truthful, not treacherous, sadistic, and murderous. In short, Shakespeare presupposes that we find good to be admirable and evil abhorrent, in all the nuance of their manifestations in concrete behaviour. We may relish a villain like Edmund, skilfully rendered by the poet in all his unillusioned intelligence, self-insight, and vitality. But if, through some lapse in the author or some obtuseness or obliquity in ourselves, we remain indifferent, paring our fingernails, or so lose our moral bearings as to attach our sympathies to Edmund and the pelican daughters instead of to Lear and Gloucester (however flawed) and to Cordelia, Edgar, and Kent, then the play collapses into an amorphous mass without catastrophe or catharsis.

III

Far from Dante himself asserting that "In His will is our peace," he portrays Piccarda making the assertion to him, in smiling commiseration for the narrowness and pettiness of his earthly mind, and in a tone as near reproof as is possible for a spirit in felicity. For Dante has just inquired whether Piccarda is not dissatisfied with her place on the lowest heavenly sphere, and she replies that God draws all wills to what He wills, so that "In His will is our peace: it is that sea to which all moves." And Dante is enlightened and convinced: "Clear was it then to me how every where in heaven is Paradise."

This statement, then, like our earlier examples, occurs in a dramatic context. There are, however, radical differences in its literary conditions. The poem is not lyric or dramatic, but narrative, in form; the author himself plays a rôle both as narrator and as one of his own characters; the total assertion this time involves a theological sub-proposition ("God

exists"); and the passage occurs in a work of which the aim is not presentative, but didactic.

So Dante himself emphasizes in his *Letter to Can Grande*. His work, he says there, is allegorical; its purpose "is to remove those living in this life" from misery to happiness; and its genus is ethical, "for the whole and the part are devised not for the sake of speculation but of possible action" (§§ 7–16). The *Divine Comedy* then, like *Paradise Lost*, *Prometheus Unbound*, *A Doll's House*, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, is a work of literature specifically designed to dramatize and empower a set of beliefs. In it Piccarda's statement about God's will is (in Dante's words) one of the many things "that have great utility and delight" which are asked from the blessed souls in heaven "who see all the truth" (§ 33). The function of this statement is not merely, like "Ripeness is all," to instance character and advance the action, but to render in a dramatic, and therefore the most efficacious possible, way a universal truth which is one aspect of the total theological truth propagated by the poem. For the first time in our discussion, accordingly, it becomes relevant to consider the relation of the reader's beliefs to his apprehension of an isolated poetic statement offered for his assent. And the experience of many readers demonstrates that the passage can certainly be appreciated independently of assent to its propositional truth. It touches sufficiently on universal human experience—since all of us, whether Catholic, Protestant, or even atheist, know the heavy burden of individual decision—to enable us all to realize in imagination the relief that might come from saying to an infallible Providence, "Not my will, but Thine be done." This imaginative capacity is a skill we in fact possess, and the business of critical theory is to recognize and confirm our reading skills, not to inhibit them by arguments from inadequate premisses.

The *Divine Comèdy*, however, raises other problems about the rôle of belief in reading thesis-narratives. What Dante undertakes, as a poet, is so to realize his abstract theological scheme as to transform our intellectual assent, which he largely takes for granted, into emotional consent and practical action. This task sets him extraordinarily difficult artistic problems. He must, to take one striking example, persuade us that the Inferno, with its savage, repulsive, and exquisitely ingenious tortures protracted in perpetuity, is not only required by God's justice, but (as the Gate of Hell announces) entailed by God's "Primal Love." And the more credible and terrifying Dante, in his one function as moral monitor, makes the exemplary sufferings of the damned, the more difficult he

makes his other task of winning our emotional consent to the thesis that God is Love, and Hell follows.

To this end Dante inserts himself, a mortal like us, into the poem as the experiential centre through whose eyes and sensibility we invariably view Hell, as well as Purgatory and Heaven. And he exhibits with entire credibility the terror, the anguish, the bewilderment, the divided mind and emotions of the finite and temporal mind which is forced to look upon the universe under the aspect of eternity. He repeatedly misapplies his sympathy, feels an irrepressible admiration for the strength and dignity of some of the sinners in their ultimate adversity, weeps with such an abandon of fellow-feeling that Virgil must sternly reprimand him, and when he hears Francesca's tender story, faints with pity.

Dante's invention of himself is the supreme artistic achievement of the *Divine Comedy*. For Dante is a poet, though a didactic poet, and like any poet must engage the sympathies and feelings of his readers with the matters he presents. To do so he appeals not merely to our theological beliefs (which we can yield or deny him), but also to those other beliefs and attitudes which we cannot withhold without draining the work of its poetic power, and which are broader than any particular creed; for all of us, whatever our doctrinal differences, share the humanity of his central character and so can follow and consent to his human experiences, whether of the inhuman horrors of the doomed in Hell or the inhuman felicity of the saints in Heaven.

Since he is, however, though a poet, a didactic poet, Dante relies on our beliefs and attitudes to involve us with the matters he shows forth, not as an end in itself, but as a means toward retroacting upon and reforming those beliefs and attitudes. If we circumvent his intention by stopping at the appreciation of what he shows forth, he would no doubt consider his great undertaking a failure. But for most of us the enjoyment of his didactic poem as, simply, a poem must perforce be enough.

IV

In our final example the question of belief was raised by the author himself, and in a form that makes it especially pertinent to contemporary literature. Wordsworth told Isabella Fenwick in 1843 that his "Intimations Ode" was based on experiences of his own childhood which he regarded "in the poem . . . as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence." But he did not, he affirms, mean "to inculcate such a belief." "I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation

in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet."[21]

With Wordsworth we impinge on our own age of self-consciousness about multiple choices in beliefs when, as T. S. Eliot declared, it is impossible to say how far some poets "write their poetry because of what they believe, and how far they believe a thing merely because they see that they can make poetry out of it."[22] William Blake had already created his own mythical system lest he "be enslaved by another man's" and thereby established the example for the spirits who came to give Yeats "metaphors for poetry."[23] Wordsworth tells us that he did not mean to assert Platonic metempsychosis, but utilized it as an available poetic premiss, an as-if ground for a metaphorical structure by which to manage what he called "the world of his own mind."

In this comment Wordsworth probably remembered what Coleridge had said about the "Ode" in the *Biographia Literaria* some twenty-six years earlier. There Coleridge had described poetic illusion as "that *negative* faith, which simply permits the images presented to work by their own force, without either denial or affirmation of their real existence by the judgment." In the same chapter he went on to justify Wordsworth's use of Platonic pre-existence as an uncredited poetic postulate, necessary in order to deal with "modes of inmost being, to which . . . the attributes of time and space are inapplicable and alien, but which yet can not be conveyed save in symbols of time and space." But Coleridge refused equal immunity from disbelief to the lines in the "Ode" hailing a six-year-old child as "Thou best philosopher . . . Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!" "In what sense," he demands, "can the magnificent attributes . . . be appropriated to a child, which would not make them equally suitable to a bee, or a dog, or a field of corn?" For "the child is equally unconscious of it as they."[24]

In his *Coleridge on Imagination* I. A. Richards took Coleridge severely to task for this limitation on the principle of suspended disbelief. For "we may," he said, "if we wish, take all the alleged attributes of Wordsworth's child," as well as their applicability to a field of corn, "as fictions, as part of the myth."[25] But again, I think, we need to make distinctions. While it is true that the poet may educe from the myth of pre-existence the conclusion that a child is the best philosopher, the myth by no means enforces this conclusion, as Plato's original use of it clearly demonstrates. We must remember that Wordsworth's "Ode," as he himself said, is not directly about the myth, but that the myth is

used to help him manage poetically experiences in this life to which everyone, "if he would look back, could bear testimony." The lyric, we can say, presents the meditation of a man like ourselves, confronted abruptly by the need to adapt himself to a discovery which, in one or another form, is universally human: the discovery that in losing his youth, he has lost the possibility of experiences on which he places great value. The postulate of the pre-existence of the soul, realized in the great image of the rising and westering sun, affords Wordsworth the spatial and temporal metaphors he needs in order to objectify, dignify, and resolve what Coleridge called "a fact of mind." Ultimately, the resolution depends on a shift in the point of view. From the vantage of the "imperial palace" of our origin, this earth is a "prison-house" and the process of aging a cumulative loss. But from the alternate vantage of this earth and this life—with its gifts of strength, primal sympathy, faith, and the philosophic mind which springs from the very experience of human suffering—maturity is seen to have its compensating rewards; so that the metaphoric sun of the initial myth, which has risen "trailing clouds of glory," sets as the sun we know in this world, yet takes another, if more sober, colouring from an eye

> That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.

What Coleridge queries is the credibility, in a poem which bears on our life in this world, and after Wordsworth has already described a very realistic six-year-old at his childish games, of the sudden apostrophe:

> Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
> Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
> That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep . . .
> Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!

This is grandly said, but I understand and think I share Coleridge's sensation that, in its place, it arouses counter-beliefs about real urchins which enforce an impression of what Coleridge called "mental bombast." If a child is a philosopher only in the sense that a field of corn is one, why the passionate and superlative encomium?

But this is a delicate decision, and I would not insist on it against the contrary judgments by Richards, Brooks, and other expert readers. I want to insist, however, on the validity of Coleridge's implicit principle. A poet is entitled to his initial predication, or myth, or *donnée*, whether or not he is prepared to assert it outside the poem, and especially if, as Wordsworth said, it has "sufficient foundation in humanity" for his

purpose "as a poet." But the inference is not justified that, from then on, anything goes. The poet must still win our imaginative consent to the aspect of human experience he presents, and to do so he cannot evade his responsibility to the beliefs and prepossessions of our common experience, common sense, and common moral consciousness. Even a phantasy such as the *Ancient Mariner*, Coleridge noted, requires a protagonist endowed with "a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure . . . that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith";[26] and in a more recent literary nightmare Kafka put at the centre of *The Trial* the matter-of-fact character K., to whose extraordinary experiences we acquiesce because his responses are so entirely ordinary.

The aesthetic cost of failure in this essential respect is demonstrated by the writings of excellent artists in which the matter is too inadequately human to engage our continuing interest, or which require our consent to positions so illiberal, or eccentric, or perverse that they arouse counter-beliefs which inhibit the ungrudging "yes" that we grant to masterpieces. Blake's prophetic poems, for instance, lack what the *Divine Comedy* possesses—a human centre of reference on which the imagination can rest; so that, fine isolated passages apart, and when we have exhausted their interest as symbolic puzzles, they become not a little tedious. Swinburne solicits our sympathy for attitudes so *outré* that his best lyrics are brilliant items of literary *curiosa*, teetering on the edge of self-parody. In *The Counterfeiters* André Gide lavishes his intricate art to beguile us into going along with a resolution in which a nephew cohabits with his uncle; but the inherent risibility of this ingeniously multiplied anomaly makes the resolution precarious. The difficulty is not in the material as such. Vladimir Nabokov's recent *Lolita*, which treats a somewhat parallel and even more scabrous matter, seems to me humanly right, in inviting an attitude of horrified hilarity toward Humbert Humbert, on whom outrageous nature has forced the grotesquely anomalous rôle of parent and paramour to a bobby-soxer. We have been assured that D. H. Lawrence is one of the handful of English novelists in the Great Tradition; yet, for all the power of the writing, perhaps others share my imperfect accord with many of his protagonists: the Aaron of *Aaron's Rod*, for example, who deserts his wife and children to give unfettered scope to his ego, only to end by delivering his will over to the writer Lilly, that peculiarly Laurentian version of the God-given Great Man.

Here we reach the twilight zone between reasoned discussion of a critical problem and the expression of idiosyncrasy, and it is important not to let any disagreement about particular applications obscure the issue in question. The great writer does not merely play upon the beliefs and propensities we bring to literature from life, but sensitizes, enlarges, and even transforms them. To get sufficient purchase on our moral sensibility, however, to accommodate it to the matters he presents, any writer must take that sensibility as he finds it. There is no escaping the principle that a poet must obey the conditions of human nature in order to be their master.

NOTES

1 *Selected Essays, 1917–1932* (London, 1932), 138.

2 "Bentham," in *Early Essays by John Stuart Mill*, ed. J. W. M. Gibbs (London, 1897), 208; Jeremy Bentham, "The Rationale of Reward," in *Works*, ed. John Bowring (Edinburgh, 1843), II, 253–4.

3 *Early Essays*, 202, 208; *Letters of John Stuart Mill*, ed. H. S. R. Elliot (London, 1910), II, 358.

4 *Science and Poetry* (London, 1926), 56–61.

5 *Science and Poetry*, 82.

6 *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (London, 1911), 137–9.

7 *Meditationes philosophicae* (1735), §§ 51–69; *Aesthetica* (1750, 1758), §§ 441, 511–18, 585.

8 *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London, 1950), 4–6; 17.

9 *Selected Essays*, 30; *The Sacred Wood* (London, 1950), viii.

10 *The World's Body* (New York, 1938), 343.

11 *On the Limits of Poetry* (New York, 1948), 48.

12 Bradley, *Oxford Lectures*, 6; Ransom, *The New Criticism* (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1941), 43, 281.

13 *The Verbal Icon* (University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 241. E. M. Forster wrote (in *Anonymity*, Hogarth Essay, 1925, 14): "[in reading a poem] we have entered a universe that only answers to its own laws, supports itself, internally coheres, and has a new standard of truth. Information is true if it is accurate. A poem is true if it hangs together."

14 *On the Limits of Poetry*, 113.

15 *The Verbal Icon*, 87.

16 "Beauty is Truth," *Symposium*, I (1930), 466–501.

17 I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism* (1930), 187, 278–9; T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 256.

18 For Keats's use of "truth" as equivalent to "existence," see *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. M. B. Forman (London, 1947), 67. I prefer attributing "That is all Ye know on earth . . ." to the lyric speaker rather than to the Urn because the former reading is at least as probable in the context, and makes a richer poem. But even if we take the whole of the last two lines to be asserted by the Urn, the point holds that their significance is qualified by the nature of the speaker.

19 *The Well Wrought Urn* (New York, 1947), 141–2; 151–2.

20 *Letters of John Keats*, 72, 227–8.

21 *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford, 1940–9), IV, 463–4.

22 "Poetry and Propaganda," in *Literary Opinion in America*, ed. Morton Dauwen Zabel (New York, 1951), 103.

23 Blake, *Jerusalem*, I. 10; Yeats, *A Vision* (New York, 1938), 8.

24 *Biographia Literaria*, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford, 1907), II, 107, 111–13, 120–1.

25 *Coleridge on Imagination* (London, 1934), 135–7.

26 *Biographia Literaria*, II, 6.

TAXATION AND ENTERPRISE

Paul Streeten

Taxation—like economics—deals with two dangerous subjects which, combined, give an explosive mixture: a man's pockets and his ideals. Fuel has been added recently by the publication in England of the three important reports of the Royal Commission on the Taxation of Profits and Income.[1] These lucidly written documents, and especially the final one, will keep the fires of controversy burning for a long time to come, not only inside Great Britain but outside her shores. Although the Commissioners have not reached revolutionary conclusions, many imaginative reform proposals were considered, discussed, and, occasionally rather regretfully, rejected. The general tenor is that the British tax system, although complex and defective in many respects, is, if not the best of all possible systems, at least among the least bad ones—and that most of its evils are necessary.

The Commission was appointed in 1951 and issued its *Report* in 1955. Its chairman was Lord Radcliffe, a distinguished lawyer, and among its fourteen members were four university teachers, four business men, three trade unionists, and one accountant. The *Report* contained a substantial "Memorandum of Dissent" signed by Mr. Kaldor and two trade unionists. This minority report is more daring and imaginative than the majority report and much of what I shall say will be drawn from or inspired by it. The most controversial issue that divided the minority from the majority was the question of whether we should impose a capital gains tax. This has been much discussed in the press and the learned journals and I shall not say much on the subject. The most fascinating aspect to me, with which I shall deal later, is the discrepancy between our wide-spread belief in the rough fairness of our tax system and the wide scope for tax avoidance which the minority report has brought to light.[2] I shall divide this essay into two parts. In the second part I shall reiterate the hackneyed question of whether free enterprise can survive taxation, but in the first part I shall turn the

question round and ask whether taxation can survive free enterprise. It is to be hoped that not both answers will be negative, or else we should get a situation like that depicted in a cartoon in which two snakes eat each other until nothing is left over.

I

When I announced a talk to an Oxford undergraduate society under the title "Can Taxation Survive Free Enterprise?" various inquirers asked whether there had not been a misprint. Should it not be the other way round? I was reminded of Colonel T. E. Lawrence's reply to his proof-reader. The latter wrote into the margin of the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*: " 'Meleager, the immoral poet.' I have put 'immortal' poet, but the author may mean immoral after all." To this Lawrence replied: "Immorality I know. Immortality I cannot judge. As you please: Meleager will not sue us for libel." Similarly, I should say: "Of the attack of enterprise on the tax system I know. Of the effects of taxes on enterprise it is difficult to judge. As you please: the surtax payers will not sue us."

We all know the traditional complaint that free enterprise—indeed sometimes a free society—cannot survive our present penal rates of taxation. We are, it is often said, killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. The lament is as old as taxation. Indeed, David Hume wrote: " 'tis to be feared that taxes all over Europe are multiplying to such a degree as will entirely crush all art and industry." Professor Lionel Robbins in a recent article argued that the tax machine more than any other thing is driving us towards collectivism. (Professor Robbins also expressed fears lest our Inland Revenue Commissioners who assess jointly those whom God has joined together in holy matrimony should encourage thereby "more casual associations"; having killed free enterprise and a free society, only free love would flourish.) I shall have to say a little about the traditional complaint in the second part, but should like to turn the tables and ask to what extent enterprise has undermined our tax system.

We are familiar with grumbles about expense accounts out of which the managerial classes are subsidized in our modern societies—as much in theoretically socialist Russia as in the theoretically more or less social democracies of the West. But if, after the Glad Hand of corporate (public or private) planning has taken over from the Invisible Hand of competition, expense-account splurging has replaced bank-account

thrift, there exists, at any rate in England, a wide-spread belief in the fundamental fairness of the system. The minority report has shaken this belief.

As Mrs. Jackson says in her article, we now have two quite separate systems of taxation: one for wage and salary earners, university professors among them (under that scheme you pay up, and no nonsense about it); the other for those who are in business or who own shares or other property. Under that scheme there is much more scope for enterprise and initiative to reduce your tax liabilities. It has been said that tax payments, particularly of surtax, for those who come under the free enterprise system are largely voluntary. This may be an exaggeration, but there are numerous ways in which tax can be avoided. I must stress that I am not concerned with tax *evasion*, that is, illegal tricks. Tax *avoidance*, "the art of dodging tax without actually breaking the law," is entirely above-board legally, and some say morally. We have it on high authority. Lord Tomlin, in the case of the *Duke of Westminster* v. *C.I.R.* (1935), said: "Every man is entitled if he can to order his affairs so that the tax attaching under the appropriate Acts is less than it otherwise would be. If he succeeds in ordering them so as to secure this result, then, however unappreciative the Commissioners of Inland Revenue or his fellow tax payers may be of his ingenuity, he cannot be compelled to pay an increased tax."

The main point is that tax liability depends on what you mean by "income." Under the enterprise system the determination of this meaning is to a large extent left to the taxpayer and his assistant, the high-powered, tax-avoidance industry that consists of lawyers and accountants —members of the most respectable and honourable professions. The secret is simply to transform as much of what unenterprising people would naïvely consider "income" into expenses, benefits in kind, and other deductible items, or into capital gains. Since none of these are taxed, you can slip through the net, however deeply it is dipped into the high incomes. Let me illustrate.

To live well on expense accounts, to occupy luxury flats owned by your company, to drive or be driven in company cars, to travel, and to entertain, is not as easy as it was before legislation a few years ago tightened the net somewhat. But it is still much easier for the man in business than for a civil servant, teacher, or a subordinate office worker.

Another operation, still at a relatively low level, is to blend your business life with your private life: make your home your office, your

maid your office cleaner, your furniture your business stock and your wife your secretary. But you must be careful: although it pays to make your wife your secretary (because you can then deduct her household allowance as a business expense and thus get additional earned income relief) never make your secretary your wife if the sum of your incomes is at all substantial. She can live with you as your mistress and you can gain benefits by settling property on her or by making a seven-year covenant in her favour (a discretionary trust and a reliable trustee may even prevent the need to continue payments should she leave you). If, however, you are really determined to marry you should then get a divorce. If you earn £5,000 per annum and live with your wife and three children, you pay £2,375 tax. But if you get a divorce and an Order of the Divorce Court to pay £1,500 to your ex-wife and £500 directly to each child, the total tax paid by the five of you will only be £1,500. You save £875. After the decree is made absolute there is no reason why you should not again all live together happily.

There was a time when company directors played musical chairs, for mutual advantage could be derived from five-year contracts with generous damage or compensation for loss of office. When the directors are sacked and swap companies the sums are capital and untaxed, but allowed as deductions by the employer.

Another important way to reduce tax liabilities is to make losses. Companies are advertised which pride themselves on a "good loss record," and it pays to buy loss companies and put profits through them. Since losses are deductible from taxable income, they become attractive forms of enterprise. This, incidentally, should be borne in mind by those who lament that high taxation discourages risk-taking. Whether the risk-taking thus encouraged is always desirable is another question. No doubt universities and research institutes have benefited from these provisions. On the other hand they have encouraged advertising (thus indirectly subsidized by the government at the rate of £125,000,000 per annum), entertaining, and various types of "improvements" whose social benefit is not always clear. The novel by the former American business-executive Cameron Hawley, *Cash McCall*, makes instructive reading.

A special case is that of what the Commissioners call, with masterly understatement, the "hobby farmer," and the popular press more colourfully "the playboy-ploughboy." He buys a decrepit farm and then begins to improve it (deducting allowances in respect of capital expenditure from his business income), to eat its produce (untaxed benefit in kind),

to enjoy it (untaxed psychic income), and to make losses (deductible from surtaxable business income). As a result of these transactions the value of the farm has gone up and if he then sells it the capital gain is untaxed. He can now start again. Though even the majority report suspects that this is going rather too far, its suggested test, namely determining whether the enterprise "lacks commercial inspiration," would not be easy to apply in a tax system that prides itself on not examining motives.

Trust funds provide an ideal method of escaping surtax and death duties, and have the incidental pleasant effect that your heirs acquire a vested interest in your life rather than your death. For a trust established less than five years before death has to pay full duties. It has been said, with not too much exaggeration, that the payment of death duties can be ascribed only to ill luck, ill will or ignorance. If you invest your fund money properly so that the assets appreciate, you can borrow from the fund to the tune of the capital appreciation. You can not only live on the loan but deduct interest payments from surtaxable income. The whole fund goes to your children and grandchildren tax-free.

Property income can, with patience, be converted into capital gains in a number of ways. If you own a house you can reduce the rent (which is taxed) but charge a large premium on the lease. If you buy shares, it pays to buy those with a low dividend yield but high prospective capital appreciation. It is no longer legal for the same person to sell dividends "cum dividend" and buy them back "ex dividend," but you can achieve the same end through two separate and unrelated transactions.

The fact that certain groups of people (stockjobbers and finance houses), being taxed on capital gains as part of their trading income, can deduct capital losses from taxable income, and that other institutions (charities, pension funds) can reclaim taxes paid, provides opportunities for mutual aid. It thus pays stockjobbers and pension funds to buy "cum" and sell "ex" so long as the capital loss is less than the gross dividend or interest payment. It pays the ordinary investor to sell "cum" so long as the net capital gain is greater than the net dividend or interest which he sacrificed. Only the Treasury loses and the gain is split between buyer and seller. This operation is called "bond-washing," and can be carried out repeatedly with the same parcel of bonds during three critical weeks every year when such transactions are permitted. The Stock Exchange Council has recently expressed its disapproval, but it is not easy to see how bond-washing can be stopped.

But those who take their tax problems seriously do not stop here.

There is also "dividend stripping." A finance house (one of those privileged institutions that can deduct capital losses, being taxed on capital gains) buys a private company with large liquid reserves. It extracts these reserves and sells back the assets or shares in a "new" company to its original owners at a loss. The loss gives rise to a repayment claim against the tax borne on the dividends. The shareholders in the private company make an untaxed capital gain. If this transaction is made with a charitable institution or pensions fund, the whole of the tax can be reclaimed.

Ingenuity has been exercised in an attempt to work out schemes for investment trusts that never pay dividends at all: all earnings are reinvested and shareholders take their profits in the form of capital appreciation. The recent tax concessions to overseas trade corporations open up entirely new fertile fields for enterprise and initiative in tax avoidance. But it would be tedious and, for most of us, unprofitable, to go on listing ways in which enterprise has undermined the nominally stiff tax system: family trusts and covenants (even gardeners have, until a few years ago, been paid by seven-year deeds); formation of private companies to avoid surtax on ploughed-back earnings, charitable subscriptions, allowances to kinsmen, elaborate loans joined to life insurance policies, and so on. Any comparison between the rise in incomes, the rise in tax rates and the negligible additional revenue from surtax and death duties provides evidence.

The clue to the whole trick is that our tax is a tax on income, but the definition of income is largely left to private initiative. Powerful accountants and first class lawyers are set to work to reduce its meaning to a minimum. Legislation is trying to close loop-holes, but this often only gives rise to new ones.

What then are the lessons and what is the moral of this tale?

In the first place it explains the puzzle of plenty in the midst of (statistical) misery. According to the National Income Blue Book only sixty people in 1949 and five hundred in 1956 earned more than £6,000 net of tax. Yet, they can be seen everywhere. Mr. Richard Bissell, the perceptive author of *The Pajama Game*, observed in the *Atlantic Monthly* (January 1956):

> And before I went over I thought the English were busted. Maybe they are, but I never saw anything like the Rolls-Royces, Bentleys, the huge Daimlers. And certainly *never*, in New York or any place, have I seen so many chauffeurs. When I remark on this, everybody is giving me different explanations. It seems these cars belong to "the wrong people." (Who in hell are the wrong people?) Or it seems they belong to "movie people" (oh now,

come off it, you chaps, the combined U.K. film industry only turns out one picture per annum, judging by their export business). Or to people who are "not eckshully rich in *paounds*, but . . ." (But what? lire, rubles, piastres?) So I can't figure it out; the whole bloody town is filled with hotshots putting on the dog, and they all talk with English accents too, so they can't very well be from Dallas. I wish I could figure out how to go broke like that and I'd have it made.

In the second place one might complain that the system is unfair. This is not a point on which I wish to dwell. Once nobody is allowed to fall below a decent minimum the case for greater income equality is less strong. One can even argue that the splashing and splurging of the expense-account *élite* adds colour and excitement to the drabber lives of the rest of us. The popular press, which knows what is good for us, gives us tales and pictures of gold-plated Daimlers, zebra-skin seat-covers ("mink is too hot!") and champagne baths on yachts. It may well be that the fun we get from reading about the antics of the rich exceeds the envy aroused by it. Nevertheless, we ought to remember that not all expenditure is equally glamorous and imaginative. Stockbrokers, company directors, and film stars ought to be screened for their contribution to our day-dreams. And it is probable that the (legal) avoidance of the few encourages the (illegal) evasion of the many.

Thirdly, and more important, the system is wasteful. Too many scarce resources are absorbed by advertising, entertaining, bogus expenses, and the tax-avoidance industry. Too many good brains of barristers, solicitors, and accountants are side-tracked into reducing tax liabilities instead of costs, and more, not quite so well paid, brains are employed by the Inland Revenue to examine and oppose this army. The rest of us pay for these services, for the tax avoider's tax savings clearly exceed the fees of his advisers. Therefore the argument that the revenue gain from a capital gains tax or from a broader definition of the income base would be small is beside the point. The gain in efficiency through better allocation of resources would be substantial. If the mental qualities that are now absorbed in increasing deductible items could be switched to increasing exports, our balance of payments problem would be solved.

Fourthly, one sometimes hears it argued that all these loop-holes are essential if private enterprise is to survive at all. If we really meant to put into practice the egalitarian intentions of our tax system, this would deprive the managerial *élite* of all incentives. If this were so (and I do not agree that it is) the answer would be to make the present system honest. If we decide that certain wealthy groups should get off lightly,

we could reduce the tax rates and levy them on a wider base. We should include capital gains and much of what are counted now as expenses. The revenue would be the same, the tax would be the same, but the inequality would be seen clearly as the price which we pay for enterprise. This may be a difficult political move, but the alternative implies deception, sooner or later loss of faith in the equity of the system, and the spread of cynicism.

Finally, we hear much of the dilemma between equity and progress. I do not believe such a dilemma exists. We can use credit policy and accelerated depreciation allowances to promote investment and growth and distribute by fiscal means what is left over for consumption in any way we believe is right. But granted the existence of such a dilemma, the private enterprise system at present attacks both objectives. A reform would not have to sacrifice efficiency to equity, but would improve both.

II

The press, most notably in the form of the *Economist*, politicians, in the person of the Lord Chancellor Lord Kilmuir, and economists, outstandingly Mr. Colin Clark, have argued that too large a proportion of our national income is taxed; that this leads to inflation and kills incentives to save, work and bear risks.

This is a big and dreary subject to which I have attempted to make one or two contributions in other places. The amount of speculation on this topic is in inverse proportion to the available evidence. As a result a good deal of nonsense is being written. Perhaps a few remarks may be justified to clear the air. The arguments are usually based on four fallacies:

i. A statistical trick which exaggerates the proportion of national income taxed;
ii. The fallacy that all taxation discourages risk and enterprise;
iii. The fallacy that more risk-taking, of whatever kind, is always desirable;
iv. The belief that private savings and private risk-taking are always preferable to public.

According to Clark's First Law of Income Dynamics, a society that taxes more than 25 per cent of its national income is bound to drift into inflation. This is accompanied by statistics purporting to show that we now take roughly 40 per cent in taxes. The war-cry has been taken

up by others. But it has been shown by Dr. Prest and Mr. Marris[3] that the high percentage is the result of a statistical illusion. The argument of the forty percenters resembles one that would complain that a society that consisted of fifty men and fifty women had an excessive proportion of women: for 50 is 100 per cent of the supply of men, hence the society consists 100 per cent of women. Total public expenditure, including transfers, subsidies, and so forth, is divided by the national income at factor cost, without transfer payments. This is no measure of anything. Certainly not of any burden, nor of "disincentives" (a tax on transfers is an incentive to work). Dr. Prest, on more reasonable assumption, has reduced the ratio to 17 per cent.

On the question of the relation of taxation to risk-bearing (closely related to enterprise) I should like only to make a few categorical statements:

1. Economic growth in the United Kingdom has been and is running at a record high. There is no evidence of stagnation.

2. The present system, far from discouraging, clearly encourages certain types of risk-taking (see previous section).

3. It is false to believe that there is any peculiar virtue in risk-taking as such. The shouldering of many risks (for example, self-created ones) has no social merits. We want useful production, not risk-taking for its own sake.

4. Where specific instances can be cited in which risks that ought to be borne are not, greater provisions to offset loss, tax loans to small and new firms, favoured depreciation allowances, and so on, can be used to stimulate desirable risk-taking. Averaging facilities should be increased so that fluctuating incomes do not suffer from the fact that more is lopped off on top than is regained at the bottom. But this does not constitute an argument for general tax reduction.

5. The appropriate reward for risk-taking is largely conventional.

6. Continued full employment has reduced some of the most deterrent risks of enterprise. But present full-employment policies are linked with the high and progressive tax structure.

7. If the worst comes to the worst, the state or other public bodies could take over some risk-taking where it is desirable. Many risks are already carried by the state as an inevitable result of income taxation. (The belief that all reductions in private risk-taking resulting from the imposition of a tax are equivalent reductions in total risk-taking is another widespread fallacy.) There is neither *a priori* nor *a posteriori*

evidence that this would bring us nearer slavery, collectivism, or totalitarianism.

Those who are worried lest the supply of risk capital should dry up, ought to welcome recent proposals that the state should buy ordinary industrial shares. Such action would set free substantial amounts of risk capital while management, where efficient, could be carried on without the disturbance of nationalization.

As far as the incentive to save is concerned, again the evidence does not suggest very deleterious effects. Even if they existed, there are few things that personal savings can do that company or public savings cannot do just as well.

The incentives of the working class do not appear to have been blunted—possibly because the complexity of the tax system leaves many workers ignorant of what they actually pay in taxes for extra effort. The problem of incentives for the managerial classes would become topical if the existing loop-holes were successfully closed.

Reform proposals can be grouped under three headings: radical reforms, slow reforms, and patching. Among radical reforms, the most interesting proposal is Mr. Kaldor's expenditure tax. It would be a progressive tax on all consumption expenditure (whether out of income, capital, or capital gains), while savings would be exempt. The objections to it have been largely focused on its administrative practicability, although some theoretical objections have also been raised.

Another possibility would be to introduce a capital gains tax. Experience of other civilized countries shows that it is practicable, although the estimated yield might not be large. But as we have seen, revenue should not be the main criterion by which it is judged.

Finally there is the capital levy or a repeated capital tax which might reduce the large amount of capital inequality that still exists in spite of much greater (theoretical) income equality. Two-thirds of the property in Britain is owned by less than 4 per cent of the population. But there is a fundamental dilemma in a democratic society about a capital tax: it can be imposed only by a government with a popular mandate and a strong majority in Parliament. But in order to be successful it must be a surprise. Otherwise capital can be dissipated or given away in a bogus fashion.

Slower reforms would concentrate on reforming the laws relating to death duties, covenants, trusts. We might limit the amount that can be transferred between individuals and we can impose duties that rise pro-

gressively, not with the total estate, but with the size of the legacy to any given beneficiary—thus encouraging diffusion of property.

Finally there are endless ways of patching up the present system. To my mind the most important measures here are, first, a greater encouragement to dynamic firms through accelerated depreciation allowances—possibly up to a 100 per cent write-off in the year in which the investment takes place. For whatever one's views about the merits of small and new firms, compared with large and established ones, it is the rapidly growing firm that suffers under our present system. The second measure is the raising of the differential between rates on unearned and earned income, coupled with exemption from this higher differential of small unearned incomes and pensions.

A good tax policy should combine social justice, the promotion of economic progress, the maintenance of incentives, and stability. Careful thought can contribute to a much greater harmony between these aims than is often admitted.

NOTES

1 H.M.S.O., 1953–5: First Report, Feb. 1953, Cmnd. 8761; Second Report, April 1954, Cmnd. 9105; Final Report, June 1955, Cmnd. 9474 (the last hereafter referred to as the *Report*).

2 See the brilliant article by Mrs. Anne Jackson, "Taxation and Hypocrisy," *Twentieth Century* (July 1955), on which I have drawn.

3 R. Marris, "A Note on Measuring the Share of the Public Sector," *Review of Economic Studies* (1954–5), 214–19.

BEOWULF AND THE HARP AT SUTTON HOO

J. B. Bessinger

"In a Field of old Walsingham, not many months past," wrote Sir Thomas Browne in 1658, "were digged up between fourty and fifty Urnes, deposited in a dry and sandy soile, not a yard deep, not far from one another." *Hydriotaphia: Urne-Buriall* is a prologue to the remarkable mediaeval scholarship of the period between 1660 and 1720 which produced figures like Dugdale, Hickes, and Wanley; and with Browne's speculations upon the urns modern archaeology in East Anglia also begins.[1] Some sixty miles to the south-east of Walsingham, at Rendlesham, near Woodbridge, Suffolk, was the seat of the Anglo-Saxon kings of East Anglia. Downstream from the site of Rendlesham, within the grounds of a private estate called Sutton Hoo, were found in 1939 the remains of an Anglo-Saxon burial-ship in which had been placed a royal treasure.[2] A fact which struck many people about the discovery was the parallel between the burial of this rowing-ship in England and the Danish ship-burial described in the opening verses of the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*. Surely one would have thought, if only a poem had described the event, that no primitive English or Danish people could have afforded to squander great wealth in the grave of a ruler? Yet there such a treasure lay in 1939. "A great obscurity herein," wrote Sir Thomas of the urns, "because, no medall or Emperour's Coyne enclosed, which might denote the dates of their enterrments." However there were coins at Sutton Hoo. The precise dating of the find (*ca.* 650–670) is made possible by them, and the ship-burial was most probably in honour of one of two kings and brothers, Anna or Æthelhere, who died in 654 and 655. In a Christian kingdom a king's body could not have been buried in pagan fashion with the ship; nor would it have been burned on a pyre, as Beowulf's was, for as Sir Thomas could have told us, "Christians abhorred this way of obsequies, and though they stick not to give their bodies to be burnt in their lives, detested that mode after death." The king at Sutton Hoo

may have been buried elsewhere, in sacred ground; or perhaps his body was lost at sea or in a far-off battle, like King Hygelac's in *Beowulf*. At any rate, there were no traces of a body in the ship; it was a cenotaph, not a grave.

This coincidence of poem and historical event is more than an archaeological curiosity. The boat-treasure informs us as well about Old English music and perhaps about Old English poetry, since instrumental music and oral poetry were in Anglo-Saxon times more commonly a joint phenomenon than now. The background of that poetry is further defined by the mixed foreign and native origin of the treasure. It may even be possible that techniques and motives in the Sutton Hoo treasure-pieces, as art forms, are somehow represented also in Old English verse. With Sir Thomas Browne as guiding spirit, "'Tis time to observe Occurences, and let nothing remarkable escape us; the Supinity of elder dayes hath left so much in silence, or time hath so martyred the Records, that the most industrious heads do finde no easie work to erect a new Britannia."

I

It would be impossible to list all the objects of the treasure in a short space, but the grave-goods included a sword with a golden pommel set with garnets and a helmet which is called "one of the outstanding masterpieces of barbaric art."[3] Originally it was plated with a burnished silver, covered by a golden trellis-work, topped by a massive silver crest terminating in dragon-heads at both ends, and set off with garnets, gilded ornaments, and niello engraving. The reconstruction of the helmet has served an unexpectedly practical modern use by emending a textual puzzle in *Beowulf*.[4] Readers of that poem, and connoisseurs of dragons generally, will admire the great battle-shield with the figure of a jewelled gilt-bronze dragon, a vigorous thrusting figure like that of the "serpent" which vaulted through the night surrounded by a terrible brilliance, but crouched in daytime to guard the buried treasure Beowulf died for. The weaponcraft in these pieces is like the work of Swedish smiths found in the boat-graves of Valsgärde near Uppsala and in the province of Uppland at Vendel, a connection striking enough when we recall that *Beowulf*, the only substantially complete Old English epic poem surviving, has a Scandinavian setting; but even more impressive in the link it suggests between the royal house of the Swedish Scylfings and the East Anglian Wuffings. The king's iron standard is surmounted by the beauti-

fully executed figure of a bronze hart, evidently a royal symbol; the dynastic hall of the Danish Scyldings, it will be remembered, had the name "Heorot," Hart House. That building was destined from the moment of its construction to be burned in war; doomed like the hart on the edge of the haunted mere in the poem, which turned to be killed by hunting dogs rather than try to escape into that terrible pool. But these objects of warfare and regalia are not perhaps the only interesting objects in the find which have a tangential reference to literature also. No other Anglo-Saxon grave has produced such quantities of gold jewellery, the quality of which is moreover unique: a golden harness made of forty-one objects of solid gold, garnet-encrusted; a superb purse-lid, a pair of epaulettes, a massive solid gold buckle which is a kind of de luxe edition of earlier Lombard pieces, developed by the Sutton Hoo goldsmith to the farthest possibilities of material, design, and artistic execution.[5] The enamel designs of some of the jewellery are an astonishing extension of *cloisonné* techniques. Naturalistic designs of men and animals in the *cloisonné* are apparently an invention of East Anglian artists; they do not appear elsewhere in this period. The jewellery, fine as it is, becomes somehow more splendid when it is realized that part of its design is Celtic, part Germanic, part Mediterranean, the foreign techniques supremely mastered by the Sutton Hoo artists and fused into a totally original form.[6] But with the mention of Anglian, Swedish, Celtic, and Lombard influences we have not exhausted the number of pieces in the find which come from foreign places. A great Irish hanging bowl; thirty-seven gold coins from Merovingian mints; sixteen pieces of late classical silver, including a large salver bearing a stamp of the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius I (491–518), a set of smaller silver bowls, and a pair of silver spoons inscribed on the handles with the Apostolic names *Saulos* and *Paulos*. Surely, as Sir Thomas remarked, "Man is a noble Animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave."

Amid so much imperial glitter it is pleasant to notice certain more personal or even domestic objects: a goose-down pillow and several pairs of leather slippers, along with two enormous drinking horns which held six quarts each of beer, ale, or mead, and some smaller cups for concentrated spirits, gourds from the Mediterranean decorated with Anglo-Saxon metalwork.

And finally, inside a heavy Egyptian bronze bowl and partly protected by the bowl from the crushing weight of earth that had filled in the boat-grave, were the crushed fragments of a quadrangular harp of

maplewood, about sixteen inches high, mounted with two gilt-bronze bird's-head escutcheons, "the first instrument of its kind . . . to be discovered, a type not hitherto recognized by musicologists, and the earliest reconstructable instrument of post-Roman Europe."[7]

"He who sets out on the ocean has no mind for the harp," remarks another Old English poem, *The Seafarer*; but the king's mourners put this beautiful little instrument in his ship as if to contradict that elegist. The harp was not only a popular instrument but a royal one; there are Old English illustrations of King David with his harp, and King Hrothgar in *Beowulf* takes his turn with the harp at a banquet to sing of past deeds and lament his youthful strength. It would appear that the Sutton Hoo king was a singer, too; a patron of song, at least; and at musical performances in his court it would be strange if he did not hear, and perhaps even sing himself, some versions of the tales that appear in *Beowulf*.

The harp has been skilfully reconstructed, and a model of it can be played. It is a delicate instrument because of its size, its shallow resonator, and its string equipment of horsehair or gut. The tone is surprisingly soft, as with most primitive stringed instruments, though its volume can be augmented by placing it on a table or plank. It is a chamber instrument, hardly suited for solo playing in a large hall. A poem might of course be sung to it in a large place, however, since presumably then the harp's diminutive sound would be less important; indeed it would be appropriately secondary.

The mere existence of the harp, much more the sophistication of its design and thus of the musical art it implies, is a new historical fact which will require some reorganization of received opinion. English historians realized at once what Sutton Hoo suggested about Anglo-Saxon civilization at large, that its richness of culture and range of contacts with northern and southern Europe and the Mediterranean had been underestimated;[8] and that the epic poem *Beowulf* was even less of a primitive fancy and more of a document of English social history than had been thought.[9] For again the uniqueness of the find must be stressed: the early harp itself, the collection of classical silver objects, the size and type of the burial-ship, the astonishing quality of the gold work, the Swedish connection so elaborately demonstrated, all these are unmatched in English archaeology. But would it be true to say that the following expert appraisal of the jewellery by Mr. R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford applied also to another aspect of Anglo-Saxon culture, its musical poetry, of which the harp is a reminder?

> Over and above the perfect assembly, marvellous finish, and sumptuous appearance of all the pieces, is an originality in design, an ingenious inventiveness in technique, a novelty in ornamental themes, and a general feeling that the artist has grown too big for the medium of which he has become past-master, that point clearly forward to the great expansion and flowering of art that distinguishes the latter part of the seventh century in Britain.[10]

In the case of at least a few Old English poems, *Beowulf* among them, that statement may prove surprisingly applicable. Not that the application will meet with universal approval. In the carefully considered words of Mr. Kingsley Amis, *Beowulf* is a poem which has "comparatively recently attracted some attention as a literary work."[11] True, this critic has some more positive commendations of the poem. It is not so long, for instance, as *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*; it only seems to be. And further: "Such virtues as it has lie in its style." In this praise of Old Germanic style in verse, which *Beowulf* shares and exploits, Mr. Amis would be opposed by a line of distinguished observers stretching from the Emperor Julian in the fourth century to Dame Edith Sitwell in our own day. We shall return to their criticisms, but now it will be enough to say that if the matter of poetic style is at issue, Mr. Amis is right and Dame Edith is wrong.

This poem has not lacked eloquent, learned defenders, but they need not be quoted here. In a sense Sutton Hoo will speak for them, if the styles of plastic art and verbal art in grave and poem are complementary, as I believe.

The origins of Old English poetic style are lost in the early confusions of the barbarian migrations, just as its survival after the Norman conquest is fragmentary and in many ways puzzling. But it can be argued that in some respects Old English poetic style at the time of Sutton Hoo and for a while afterwards was marvellously inventive, ingeniously original and experimental, and that it looked forward, not backward, to a development that the accidents of history curtailed but did not entirely destroy. After all, the period of Sutton Hoo was Cædmon's period; the discovery that one could sing Christian songs in alliterating stress-metres must have seemed to many, as it did to Cædmon and Bede, marvellous if not miraculous. We may be content with calling the discovery ingenious, or worse, inevitable. But the period which could foster such a successful experiment was not intellectually dull.

The same originality and novelty can be glimpsed in smaller details. It has been shown that the ornamental theme of the Beasts of Battle—the carrion beasts who wait upon the victims of war—is a traditional and formulaic theme used in nine surviving Old English poems. It must

have been an expected ornament in any poem of battle. It is nowhere used to such good effect, so vividly or movingly, as in *Beowulf*, where the contextual placement of the ornament in an emotive narrative, and the representation of the raven conversing with the eagle, are unparalleled.[12] Whether *Beowulf* is the first and best of the poems to use the motif, or merely the most original and finished, its excellence in this detail is outstanding.

It may be only coincidence that in the Sutton Hoo *cloisonné* work, also, certain formulaic animal designs occur in a naturalistic style unique in the Germanic world of the period, but shortly to be imitated in the brilliant eighth-century illuminated books of Northumbria. Let us consider for a moment that the *Beowulf* poet's talking creatures are by no means the only notable animals in this remarkable poem. There is the hart already mentioned, trapped at the pool's brink (ll. 1368–72), and we might add the steed bereft of its master and stamping in the empty courtyard (ll. 2264b–65a), and even the great dragon itself, for whose splendour the poet betrays a kind of reluctant admiration,[13] along with sympathy for the dragon's predicament when he wakens to discover his barrow robbed: he sniffs out the spoor of his enemy, circling and reentering the barrow like a frustrated mastiff (ll. 2287–2302a). All these beasts, serpent-dragon, grieving horse, trapped hart, and talkative birds, are presented with humane imagination. One cannot but think of the Franks Casket, whose panels comprise an anthology of Mediterranean and Germanic legend carved in whalebone. Birds or beasts of some kind are shown on each panel of the box, and the most striking of the animals is the horse with head bowed in mourning for his dead master Sigurd—a naturally designed and evocative scene which strikingly parallels the elegiac reference in *Beowulf*. The Casket is Northumbrian work of *ca.* 700. G. Baldwin Brown remarks that its artist "was breaking new ground in this translation of literary motives from the heroic poems into plastic art."[14] This may well be so, but was the legend of Sigurd common Germanic property or did it reach Northumbria from the Swedish settlement in East Anglia; and did literary motives from other Scandinavian legends, such as those connected with *Beowulf*, move northward also, with the zoömorphic decorations of the Sutton Hoo style which appear in the Book of Durrow immediately after the Sutton Hoo period, and in the eighth-century Lindisfarne Gospels and Book of Kells?[15] If so, the connection between naturalistic animal-art in poem and treasure is suggestive enough to ensure that we should keep open some of the questions raised about the early date and the Northumbrian composition of the poem as we have it.[16]

To return, however, to the matter of relative crudity or polish in poetic style: a student of Old English poetry cannot look at the Sutton Hoo displays in the British Museum, in particular those of the jewellery, with their exquisiteness and complexity of design and colour and material, without sensing perhaps for the first time that these same qualities, transferred as it were into verse, exist also in the text of *Beowulf*, late, corrupt, and misrepresentative of its original form as it must doubtless be considered. An analysis of this poetry into its parts—basic rhythm and alliteration, special rhythmic effects, verbal and formulaic texture, narrative method and characterization, additional ornaments of crossed and transverse alliteration, internal rhyme and end rhyme, enjambement of alliteration, and various other sound effects—leaves one feeling about the poetry as about the jewellery: a past master of the art is outgrowing his medium.

We need look only at a single short section of the poem to see how effective this elaborately concentrated style can be; like the lid of the Sutton Hoo purse, it embraces much in little. The passage occurs towards the end of the poem (ll. 3114b–19) and is the final description of battle or mention of battle in the narrative. It serves as a climax to all such references before it, and is the finale too for Wiglaf's part in the story; it is his last speech, and it characterizes him further even as he disappears from the scene. He is giving orders for the preparation of the pyre on which Beowulf will be laid, a grieved and battle-crazed young man who has just, in his very first combat, had to help slaughter a dragon and watch the dragon kill his beloved Beowulf, his kinsman and lord. In the fight Beowulf was deserted, Wiglaf believes, by all the troop save himself. Heart-sick, he has chastised the cowards scathingly, and, as Beowulf's heir, reported to Beowulf's people the king's last words. He has certainly had a very big day, even for a hero. Now there is nothing to do but kindle the fire. But as he speaks the conventional words a very unconventional thing happens. The fire image modulates or merges to an image of sound (that of arrows in deadly whistling flight) *at the instigation of sibilant sounds in the fire-image passage itself*, and sweeps Wiglaf into an outburst of grief, admiration, and recollection which is purely phonic.

*"Nu *s*ceal gled *f*retan,
weaxan wonna leg wigena *str*engel
*þone ðe o*f*t ge*b*ad isern*sc*ure,
*þonne *str*æla *st*orm *str*engum ge*b*æded
*sc*oc o*f*er *sc*ildweall, *sc*e*f*t nytte heold,
*f*eðergearwum *fus* *fl*ane *f*ulleode."

"Now must fire feed on, dark flame consume, the ruler of warriors, him who often survived the iron shower when the storm of arrows forced on by bow-strings rushed over the shield-wall, the shaft did its duty, eager with its feather-gear it followed the arrow-head."

The rhythm of this selection will be spoken of later on; here we may look instead at an extraordinary concentration of sound-effects. The main technical accomplishment, it would seem, is the poet's brilliant setting of plain circumstantial weapon-words in a vortex of mimetic consonant sounds. The plucked bowstrings[17] are rendered by explosive *b*-sounds in the slant-rhyming syllables *-bad* and *-bæd-*; the metallic and wooden rush of barb and shaft, and then the fluttering feather-sounds, by a complex of sibilant and fricative consonants and consonant-clusters: *sc-*, *-cs-*[*-x-*], *st-*, *-z-*[*-s-*], *-sc-*; *ſ-* and *-ſ-*; all these sounds occur *before* the beginning of the clause describing the arrow-flights. With the onset of the clause beginning, *þonne stræla storm*, all three interlocking sets of sounds have been established, entirely in syllable-positions removed from the main stress-positions of the alliterative patterns in their respective lines. The stressed words in regular alliterative positions now take up the exploitation of these sounds with tremendous power, and the enjambed lines flash past without rhythmical interruption (shown in the quotation above by asterisks, to be discussed below), so fast that no hearer (or for that matter reader) could possibly appreciate all that was happening. The effect is everything, the technique nothing, in live performance. The presence of thirteen extra alliterating sounds (outside the alliterating scheme) would however, in so short a passage, have signalled to the most casual ear that something special was happening, and that is all a poet or singer would care about.

Such an analysis must admit, of course, that the composer-performer might well be all but unconscious of some of these effects himself until he uttered them. The psychological "point of no return" in this case would be the verse-pair ending with *isernscure*, which by itself contains all the critical consonants together, and which embarks the poet upon his arrow-image. After that, sound and sense fly along side by side almost involuntarily. But it is not just that the poet is momentarily drunk with sounds; his expert training in this exacting verse has seen to it that the sounds, when specially stressed, are functional to some important purpose; they are far from being automatic droning noises. Note that the *s-* and the *ſ*-complex are united in the stressed and thematic words *sceft* and *ſus*, the noun and adjective of the final clause. And *ſus* is doubly thematic; it modifies the subject of the clause, to be sure,

but also its connotations and related meanings of "swift, eager, deadly, and doomed" make it a profoundly appropriate word here,[18] in Wiglaf's final speech and in connection with his lament for Beowulf's once inviolate performance in battle. The shaft habitually did its duty; followed where it had to go, swiftly, urgently, dangerously, and fatally; so had Beowulf.

We have not done with the message yet, but shall see shortly that the addition of its living rhythm to the passage heightens still further an impression of potent art. The only adverse criticism that could be made of this selection would be that it is surfeited with artifice. Tastes will differ here, in poetry as in jewellery; I have been trying to demonstrate that a craftsman did his job well by exploiting the materials his craft gave him, and the taste of his period was for a design packed with detail and colour. If I may quote Mr. Bruce-Mitford again,

> We see in the gold jewellery also those standards of technical perfection, that love and mastery of the ingenious and the intricate, those self-same spreads of carpet-like ornament, completely covering all available surfaces, and the panelled designs, which are characteristic of the later Hiberno-Saxon art. The art of the Sutton Hoo jewellery is an art full of seeds of new development, impatient with the restraints imposed by its intractable medium, asking only the freedom of pen on vellum to achieve a fresh advance.[19]

It would be no refutation of Sutton Hoo to say that other Anglo-Saxon graves fail to approach its rich concentration of beauty. Nor is *Beowulf* approached by any other Anglo-Saxon poem, and its art may have been exceptional; but it is a work at which we must marvel, produced during a time of transition to literate modes of composition which might have developed the art still further, and perhaps did, but "time hath so martyred the Records."

II

An essential component of early Old English verse, which would have to be better known if the poetry were to be properly appreciated, was Old English music. Unfortunately almost nothing can be known about it in the sense that it could be reconstructed like a buried harp. Still this music, like the puzzling sirens' song in *Hydriotaphia*, is "not beyond all conjecture." In the first place, the musical culture of Anglo-Saxon England, like the material culture at Sutton Hoo, was a mixture of Germanic, Celtic, and Mediterranean-Christian elements. The fusion of Germanic tribal battle-songs and heroic odes, Irish bardic singing,

and Roman church music was obviously not, however, so complete as the fusion of styles in Sutton Hoo art, and early documents for the study of all three components are scarce. Some few positive facts and a number of reasonable suppositions may nevertheless be gathered.

First, there is something to be said about the musical tradition's continuity in time if we limit the scope of the survey mainly to secular singing. However tenuous the connections and with whatever changes along the way, a relationship must be supposed between the chants and panegyric odes mentioned by Tacitus in the first century, the complaints about Germanic song and harp-playing by non-Germanic observers in the fourth to sixth centuries,[20] the numerous mentions of harp and voice recitals in the epic songs and fragments of the seventh and eighth centuries, Alcuin's pointed distinction in 797 between the readings of sermons about Christ and the singing of heathen songs about Ingeld, various references to harp-and-voice performances in the prose and verse of the ninth to eleventh centuries, and reports of native song in twelfth-century Latin chroniclers like Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury,[21] long after Taillefer, singing a battle-song about Roland, landed with Duke William at Hastings. Twelve centuries of music, about seven centuries of which can fairly be called English; it cannot be that all sources of knowledge about such a continuum have been thoroughly explored.

Secondly, one may consider the almost symphonic catalogue of Old English musical instruments and musical terms compiled by F. M. Padelford.[22] String, wind, and percussion instruments of many kinds are listed, but one might mention the harp, the psaltery, the tympanum, and the fiddle; the organ, about which there is much controversy, though it seems that organs may have been used in English churches from the sixth century and that there was an organ of four hundred pipes in Winchester in the tenth century;[23] bagpipes, reeds, horns and trumpets, bells and drums large and small. The prominence of the harp may be imagined from the fact that there have survived six Old English words for the harpist's plectrum alone.

Instrumental music was clearly a prominent part of Old English culture, and much of it must have been associated with vocal music. There are references to secular and religious singing at festal events, funerals, and ordinary occasions in the hall. Of dancing and singing in the fields and kitchens we know almost nothing, but it is significant that snatches of ritual poetry, almost certainly musical, survive in eleventh-

century manuscripts taken down five hundred years after Christianity came to the island—metrical charms of mixed pagan-Christian content.

Old English literature is of course full of musical references. Several of the *Riddles* appear to describe instruments like the harp, the reed, the bagpipe, the fiddle, and the horn. In *Deor* and *Widsith* glimpses are caught of the professional *scopas*, gleemen and singers of tales, at their proud work and in their sorrows. *Beowulf* itself rings with music. We hear of, and occasionally have paraphrased in the text, spontaneous formulaic compositions of short heroic songs and religious verses. The action of the narrative proper is opened by the harp music at Heorot which brings the hate-maddened Grendel out of the fens, and closed with funeral songs at Beowulf's pyre and barrow. The funeral lament sung at the burning of the dead in Finn's stronghold (ll. 1117b–18a) is a song within a song within a song, so complex and lapidary are the narrative frames of this epic narrative song or recitative.

In what specific musical forms are we to conceive of all this music? How would a harp, for example, be tuned and played? As to musical poetics, Old English studies today are where ballad studies were in Child's time. Nobody now would think of talking about the ballads without discussing at the same time their integral musical settings; but no Cecil Sharp or Béla Bartók can do us the service of rediscovering the musical bases of Old English poetry and its relations with European popular song. Even so it may well be that the essential homogeneity of certain kinds of European music, and the demonstrable continuity and survival of some of them, open avenues of study that have not yet been sufficiently investigated. The use of pentatonic scales in the secular popular music of outlying areas of Europe like England and Russia can be seen as evidence of a widespread use of this kind of musical structuring in those areas and formerly in others—Germany and Italy, for instance—where a diatonic scale has replaced them in folk music. The historical sequence of ancient Germanic melodies can be followed into the hymns of the Old Order Amish, a branch of the Mennonites, who immigrated to eastern Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century.[24] On the borders of the Western European area, the independent existence, for no less than nineteen centuries, of certain melodies in Near Eastern Jewish groups has been demonstrated.[25] For some European areas and even in the British Isles it may some day be possible to construct a more satisfactory description of early mediaeval secular music than we have at present.

As for the Old English harp and the technique of its playing, something can be gathered from the written records of the period about the use of the plectrum or the fingers, the manner of plucking the harp by either method, the chording of notes, the general nature of the music produced, and the social fashions of its production. What we cannot learn from these records is the tonal identity of the music; neither can we learn it from the Sutton Hoo harp itself, no matter how perfectly reconstructed. A reed-pipe buried in a tomb for a thousand years can be unearthed and its musical tones reproduced or exactly imitated; a harp once unstrung can never be tuned exactly the same way again.

Let us notice first that Old English vocal music to harp accompaniment was a social art critically listened to: we hear again and again of the harp passing from singer to singer, or of a *scop* sitting at the feet of his lord and playing from that position. It must have been necessary to sit to hold the Sutton Hoo instrument; its size and shape force one to hold it on one's knee or in one's lap or to place it on a flat surface in order to play it. There are indications that it was sometimes held by one person and played by another.[26] A duet or antiphonal performance of some kind is represented in *Widsith*: "Scilling and I with clear voices raised a song before our victorious lord; loud to the harp the music rang out; then many proud men, those who were expert in music, said they had never heard a better song." Widsith obviously equated quality of music with volume of tone, and other references support him in this, for instance in the *Riming Poem*: "Rather there was a fruitful season, a twanging harp-string . . . servants bustled about, the harp was resonant, it sounded loudly, voices resounded." A happy scene, but hardly imaginable as a setting for chamber music. Quite different is the scene in *The Fortunes of Men*: "One must sit at his lord's feet with a harp . . . and ever rapidly agitate the strings; let the leaping plectrum, the melodious nail, sound loudly; he is much sought after"—a virtuoso in a congenial environment, like the Sutton Hoo goldsmith. The emphasis on professional dexterity in what sounds like a harp solo may suggest the possibility of an occasional deft decoration by the harp in accompaniment. *The Gifts of Men* also mentions the quick movements of the hands on the harp, without mention of the plectrum.

One may wonder in fact how often the plectrum was used, though it was certainly common. A passage in King Alfred's translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care* is highly interesting in this regard. Gregory in the original Latin is saying that a teacher must touch the heart of all his

hearers with the same charitable doctrine, but not always by the same methods. After all, as Alfred translates enthusiastically, "One can rouse a dog with the same gentle whistle that calms a horse." Then Gregory proceeds: "For what else are the minds of attentive hearers, but, if I may say so, the taut strings of a harp, which the skilful harpist plays with a variety of strokes, that he may not produce a discordant melody? And it is for this reason that the strings give forth a harmonious melody, because they are not plucked with the same kind of stroke, though plucked with the same plectrum."[27] Alfred omits the last sentence, thus dropping mention of the plectrum. He also revises the musical simile. "What then shall we call the thoughts of men but, as it were, the stretched strings of a harp, which the harper very differently draws [tightens?] and stirs [*swiðe ungelice tieh∂ and styre∂*], and so prevents them from singing a sound unlike the one he wishes?" For the plectrum sentence in Gregory he then substitutes this one: "He touches them all with the same hand, to make them sound harmoniously [*∂æt hie anne són singen*], although he touches them differently."[28] Alfred adjusts the translation presumably to suit the case of an instrument and a technique of which he has some knowledge. He adds a reference to the tuning of the instrument and, if I read him rightly, to the production of chords upon it; he omits the plectrum reference to amplify his previous sentence and to stress the use of the hand or fingers.

There seems no reason to think that harp-accompanied song died out early in the Old English period, as Andreas Heusler and others have stated.[29] Contemporary Serbo-Croatian narrative singing to musical accompaniment largely invalidates Heusler's objection to this very thing by showing that it is still possible today, at the expense of considerable musical monotony.[30] The more monotonous the tune, the less distracting from the verse. It was the rhythm of the harp, not its melody, which must have been useful and pleasing to the Old English singers, as to contemporary Slavic singers with their *gusle*.[31] Further, internal evidence of poems like *Beowulf* seems to show that harp-accompanied song was still common at a later time, even for heroic narrative songs of considerable length—the song of Finn summarized in that poem, for example.[32] Our difficulty in imagining the kind of accompaniment necessary for such a performance should not prevent consideration of its possibility. We have seen that a variety of techniques was available to the harp soloist or accompanist: single notes; series, and even lively runs, of notes, with or without the plectrum; delicate or vigorous tone pro-

duction; and if Alfred's translation is proper evidence, chords plucked by the fingers. We must try to imagine a type of melodic line as a base to recitation which would be (i) a conceivable approximation of a modal melody such as might have been used, (ii) inconspicuous enough not to compete with the recitation at the wrong times, (iii) with character enough to supplement the effects of the recitation at the right times, that is, in various pauses and rests, and (iv) of a sufficiently simple and repetitive character to enable a singer to accompany himself for long passages without being hindered by the attention his instrument would demand.[33]

How long might a singer perform at one time, and could *Beowulf* have been recited all through in one performance?[34] We today are not conditioned to long narrative recitals in verse, and it is perhaps difficult to reconstruct the sensibilities of the Anglo-Saxons in this respect. Still, anyone who cares to try it can recite *Beowulf* aloud in from three to four hours, depending upon his decisions about tempo and upon the toughness of his vocal cords. The verse, in live performance, moves forward very quickly; the impression of its "leisurely" movement is a literary illusion radically altered by an oral experience of the total poem.[35] If an Anglo-Saxon singer or team of singers, as in *Widsith*, wished to perform it whole, one would think an Anglo-Saxon audience could have matched their stamina. The poem could be delivered in one long sitting, that is to say, if the listeners in an Anglo-Saxon hall were not less hardy than a modern audience at an "uncut" *Hamlet* or *Man and Superman* or *Parsifal*, not to mention recent film epics equally staggering and even more popular. In the case of *Beowulf* we might assume intervals between the three main episodes for refreshment of bard and audience alike;[36] otherwise time is no obstacle.

III

Now, having seen that Anglo-Saxon music was plentiful and various, and that contemporary evidence for harp techniques bears out the existence of music for voice and harp, we may look again at *Beowulf* to judge whether some knowledge of that music adds anything to an understanding of the musical bases of the poem and to an appreciation of it as an oral epic.

Of course we can read the poem only as a book epic, and it must have been so read in the latter part of the Anglo-Saxon period, but in some basic sense the chronological details of which are not clear, *Beowulf* must have been first composed orally in the presence of a live audience

by a singer who may or may not have been unlettered, sometime in the seventh or eighth century. Metrical formulas—recurring and interchangeable phrases strung together in similar metrical situations—make an oral singer's improvisation possible on one hand, and on the other enable him to fulfil his traditional obligations to the oral community which is his audience.[37] The fundamental operation of this oral process is the same in Anglo-Saxon or Homeric verse, and Yugoslav bards of this century use formulas to compose narrative epics as long as the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. The process of living oral transmission is one by which primitive epic narrative is created and by which it is developed. Naturally there is no fixed text to an oral narrative song; it is changed with every recitation. Therefore the fixed text of *Beowulf* in MS. Cotton Vitellius A. xv is not an oral song. But future studies must decide to what extent the conventions of literary transmission, over a period of some two centuries, may have affected this oral poem. For some other Old English poems we can see rather more clearly what the difference between a book epic and an oral epic is. Cædmon was improvising and singing his Christian narrative epics at Whitby during the period *ca.* 658–80, just when the Sutton Hoo ship was buried. The single piece of Cædmon's which has come down to us certifies Bede's account of Cædmon and shows how completely the little *Hymn* is made up of formulas.[38] They are the formulas of pagan Germanic verse adapted to Christianity; they needed only to be rearranged in the traditional Germanic rhythmic matrix, a simpler procedure for an oral singer than for a lettered one, though even in modern verse one can see how the process works, in a poem by W. H. Auden which sets a prescription for changing a love poem into something the same and not the same:

> Stick at your desk and hold your panic in;
> What you are writing may still save your skin:
> Re-sex the pronouns, add a few details,
> And, lo, a panegyric ode which hails
> (How is the Censor, bless his heart, to know?)
> The new pot-bellied Generalissimo.
> Some epithets, of course, like *lily-breasted*
> Need modifying to, say, *lion-chested*,
> A title *Goddess of wry-necks and wrens*
> To *Great Reticulator of the fens*. . . .[39]

But if Cædmon's songs were oral only, how did even one fragment of his work survive? Obviously by being copied down; but Bede says nothing of this process of dictation and transcription. Two centuries

later the process was so commonplace that a translator of Bede into Old English could not imagine Cædmon composing in any other way, so that he added a significant phrase to Bede's text: "His musical verse [*his sang and his leoþ*] was so pleasing to hear that his teachers copied it *from his dictation* [*æt his muðe writon*]."[40] At this latter period we also find lettered poets referring to books in their poems (*Brunanburh*), signing their poems with runic acrostics (Cynewulf), and betraying other characteristic signs of literacy. But these lettered poets were still working in an oral-formulaic tradition and their bookish poems seem to show the continued effect of the tradition of the harp, if not the actual use of the harp in recitation.

Professor John C. Pope describes this rhythmical tradition in Old English verse as a unifying and regularizing system of responses to time-units. Varieties and freedoms of rhythm within the system are almost infinite, and pauses or rests before certain verses rhythmically punctuate a poem and add to the movement of sequential verses a sense of controlling order. Thus the rests "contribute in a positive fashion to both the meaning and the beauty of the poem."[41]

This theory, involving as it does a quasi-mathematical measurement of what was once spontaneous oral verse, must run the danger of seeming more arbitrary than it is. The danger holds for any theory of prosody, to be sure. It has been objected that, even granting the harpist, "It is a mere fiction to suppose that he used his harp as a metronome."[42] Of course he did not. No musician could do so. Rhythmic freedom is the mark of every collaboration of voice and instrument. To use a harp as a regularizing principle would however be something very different. The concept of equal and underlying units of time as a prosodic device does not imply, surely, that the regularity ideally described will not be violated constantly, subjectively or otherwise, and the improvisatory element in musical performance must be taken into consideration by any musical theory whatever. But it is useless to try to think that a harpist used his harp unlike a metronome, that is unrhythmically; or that he strummed it aimlessly as he chanted, or stroked it from time to time as an emblem of his honourable office; or that he used it only for an occasional emphasis, to underline an exclamatory word—which anyway would bring us close to the metronome again. A plectrum could not have come into use for any of these purposes, nor in order to pluck a single resonant note from time to time from surrounding silence. It and the harp must have been used in some regular and traditional way which was functional to oral

verse. But whatever the harp technique used, it is clear that the effects of its rhythmical punctuation vary greatly from line to line and from section to section of the poem.

Old English verse, like the Sutton Hoo jewellery, is complicated and imposing. It would be so even without this possible refinement of initial rests and dramatic punctuation. The verse is strongly stressed and resonant, and if Anglo-Saxon tastes in poetry resembled their tastes in harp-playing, some audiences liked a little noise, a little shouting, once in a while. On the other hand the verse can be delicate in movement; tender, even sentimental, in tone. But whatever the sense of a given passage, the initial rests seem to sustain it and often to heighten it. The arrangement of pauses and stresses in the short example about Wiglaf quoted above will have been noted. The asterisks represent initial rests in the verses they precede, and these minute breaks in the rhythmic flow punctuate the narrative dramatically and appropriately. So long as Wiglaf's distracted imagination contemplates the pyre itself and dwells momentarily upon the recollection of Beowulf in former days, in former battles, the rhythmical punctuation, without interrupting the normal syntactical outlines of the verse, pulses heavily, as if in anticipation of the heavy, drum-like, funereal punctuation of the poem's final lines, shortly to follow. But with the word *isernscure* the sounds of arrows in flight have seized his imagination, and the verses gather their breath in one last initial rest, then bolt forward in a headlong momentum without rests that further dramatizes the already remarkable sound-effects we have discussed. Similar examples from the poem could be listed at great length.

Pope very properly calls attention to the danger of reading late transcriptions of early oral poetry too subtly,[43] and we shall certainly never know to what extent such felicities were deliberate or inherent in the style and language. Nevertheless they are part of the work as it comes to us, and the sound-effects of this intensely constructed poem are not more sophisticated than the techniques of Germanic *cloisonné*, Celtic millefiori and *champlevé*, and niello engraving organized into the Sutton Hoo pieces. Even the weapons of the East Anglian king showed as elaborate a fusion of elements as this functionally traditional verse: consider the great sword with its Rhenish blade, Swedish pommel, and native East Anglian jewelled sword-knot.[44]

This verse is finely made: splendid though damaged. One can hardly find in it the qualities found by Dame Edith Sitwell: "The earliest English poetry of all, with its crude and unskilled thumping, or creaking, alliteration, echoes the sound of those earthy occupations which accompany the

work of food-getting."[45] With which may be compared the remark of one of the first critics of Old Germanic verse, the Emperor Julian: "Indeed I have observed that even the barbarians across the Rhine sing savage songs composed in language not unlike the croaking of harsh-voiced birds, and that they delight in such songs."[46]

The materials of traditional oral narrative are extensive and flexible, capable of many styles and of many degrees of finish. The eclecticism of Sutton Hoo art and its native adaptation are equally wonderful; if few early Germanic poems can claim the quality and polish of *Beowulf* they all shared its possibilities—which have hardly been thoroughly examined in our time—along with its wide-ranging system of legendary reference. In an age before patriotism was thought of, a Scandinavian might be the hero of an English poem, as a Walter of Aquitaine or a Theoderic the Ostrogoth the heroes of Scandinavian legend. Two centuries after Sutton Hoo another royal lover of English verse and European heroic legend, Alfred, devout Christian that he was, allowed his descent to be traced from Woden and wrote into a book of Roman philosophy an elegy for Brutus and Cato and that celebrated warrior-goldsmith Wayland, all together. The Alfredian *Metres of Boethius* even manage to include the noblest poets of antiquity in the brotherhood of *scopas*: "Homer, first in songcraft among the Greeks, most artful in music, friend and teacher of Virgil, that famous *scop* and best of masters." In the same way the heroes of an earlier Western Europe are surveyed by Widsith as if they were contemporaries.

It is not known as yet how or exactly when the foreign materials in *Beowulf* were assembled, but it seems very possible that they came partly from Sweden with the forebears of the East Anglian king whose cenotaph was found in 1939, which would make it even more likely that the intricate verbal art with which they are included in *Beowulf* is linked with the Sutton Hoo culture. The connection is as patent, at least, as that between the symbolic and "artificial" art of the fourteenth-century alliterative *Pearl* and the worldly richness of fashion in that age.[47] A closer parallel might be the representation—one might say rather characterization—of Mary in the glass at Chartres and in the exactly contemporary *Miracles de la Sainte Vierge* (*ca.* 1225) by Gautier de Coincy—monk, musician, and poet—or in the similar collection by Jean le Marchant.[48] In a word, the culture represented at Sutton Hoo seems a possible centre about which we can imagine a poem like *Beowulf* taking shape as oral narrative in a period of uneven transition to literary forms and the composition of literary texts properly so called. *Beowulf*'s place in that tran-

sition will be hard to determine because the bulk of its surrounding material has perished, leaving this one poem in misrepresentative solitude.

It is a little as if we had only one novel or short story from the whole of the Yoknapatawpha cycle of William Faulkner; or as if a fragmentary manuscript of Joyce's *Stephen Hero* had survived some international catastrophe only to arouse in antiquarians of the distant future a suspicion that Joyce had composed also some heroic legends about that ancient goldsmith Daedalus and that comrade or analogue of Beowulf, the wide-voyaging Odysseus. Basically there was but one "epic" in north-west Europe; the enjoyment of its multiple forms depended on a knowledge, not profound but wide, of its whole extent. It was a kind of solar system of undifferentiated formulaic material in which individual singers traced out constellations.

Only the broad outlines of the system are known; and what is left of its poetry has scarcely begun to be studied as verse. It is comforting to think that there are yet more mounds at Sutton Hoo which may be excavated; for in Anglo-Saxon poetry as in East Anglian archaeology, to quote Sir Thomas Browne one last time, "That great antiquity America lay buried for thousands of years; and a large part of the earth is still in the Urne unto us."

NOTES

1 Sir Thomas Browne, *Works*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1929), IV. Cf. David C. Douglas, *English Scholars* (London, 1939), 28–30.

2 The excavation at Sutton Hoo was carried out under the direction of Mr. C. W. Phillips, F.S.A., and an account of it appeared in *The Antiquaries Journal*, XX (1940), 149–202. See also *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: A Provisional Guide* (British Museum, 1947, reprinted 1956). The most important discussions of the general significance of the find are two by R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, "The Sutton-Hoo Ship-Burial: Recent Theories and General Interpretation," *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archæology and Natural History*, XXV, Part I (1950), 1–78; and "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial," published as the Appendix to R. H. Hodgkin, *A History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1952), II. References to the find are gathered in Francis P. Magoun, Jr., "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: A Chronological Bibliography [1939–1952]," *Speculum*, XXIX (1954), 116–24, to which list a supplement will soon appear. To Mr. Bruce-Mitford, Keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities in the British Museum, I am especially indebted for the chance to examine and discuss the harp fragments and the harp-replica, and to take part with Mr. Peter Crossley-Holland of the B.B.C. in experimental recordings and a broadcast of Old English verse to the accompaniment of the harp.

3 Herbert Maryon, "The Sutton Hoo Helmet," *Antiquity*, XXI (1947), 137–44.

4 Bruce-Mitford, Appendix to Hodgkin, 707–8 and n. 21.

5 M. P. Hornik, "The Sutton Hoo Treasure of the British Museum," in *Arte del Primo Millennio*, ed. Edoardo Arslan (Torino, 1950), 320–6.

6 Nils Aberg, *The Occident and the Orient in the Art of the Seventh Century: The British Isles* (Stockholm, 1943), 56.

7 R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial," *Nature*, CLXV (1950), 339.

8 Sir Frank M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1947), 50–2.

9 Peter Hunter Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1956), 342.

10 Bruce-Mitford, *Nature*, CLXV, 339.

11 *Spectator* (April 5, 1957), 445.

12 Francis P. Magoun, Jr., "The Theme of the Beasts of Battle in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *Bulletin de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki*, LVI (1955), 81–90; Adrien Bonjour, "*Beowulf* and the Beasts of Battle," *PMLA*, LXXII (1957), 563–73.

13 See ll. 2273 f., 2576, 2671, 2832 ff.

14 *The Arts in Early England*, vol. VI, Part I, chap. II (London, 1930), 49.

15 Bruce-Mitford, Appendix to Hodgkin, 730–3.

16 Ritchie Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century* (London, 1935).

17 Some editors translate *strengum* adverbially, "with strength," others as dative plural, "by [bow-]strings." The poetic context described here surely requires the second meaning. Old English poetic texts quoted or translated in this essay are from *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, I–VI, edd. G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie (New York, 1931–1953).

18 Gustaf Stern, "Old English *Fuslic* and *Fus*," *Englische Studien*, LXVIII (1933/34), 161–73.

19 Bruce-Mitford, Appendix to Hodgkin, 731.

20 R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (London, 1952), 1–2.

21 *Ibid.*, 27–8, 32–4.

22 "Old English Musical Terms," *Bonner Beiträge zur Anglistik*, IV (1899).

23 Willi Apel, "Early History of the Organ," *Speculum*, XXIII (1948), 191–216; see esp. pp. 203, 205–6.

24 Bruno Nettl, "The Hymns of the Amish: An Example of Marginal Survival," *Journal of American Folklore*, LXX (1957), 323–8.

25 A. Z. Idelhsohn, *Jewish Music in its Historical Development* (New York, 1929).

26 Bruce-Mitford, *Nature*, CLXV, 341.

27 St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, tr. Henry Davis, S.J. (Westminster, Maryland, 1950), 89–90.

28 Henry Sweet, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, Early English Text Society (O. S.) 45, 50 (1871–1872), pp. 174–5.

29 *Die Altgermanische Dichtung* (Berlin, 1923), 36 ff. Cf. Winfred P. Lehmann, *The Development of Germanic Verse Form* (Austin, 1956), 128–31.

30 C. M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (London, 1952), 38–9.

31 Milman Parry and Albert Bates Lord, *Serbocroatian Heroic Songs* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), 8.

32 Two eleventh-century prose documents, one a translation of a lost Latin source, the other a native homily, use the same verbal formula (". . . began to stir the harpstrings . . .") to describe a harp performance; in the former case it is a brief vocal performance as well. See J. Zupitza, "Die altenglische Bearbeitung der Erzählung von Apollonius von Tyrus," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprache und Literaturen*, XCVII (1896), 17–34, and Wulfstan, *Homilien*, ed. A. Napier (Berlin, 1883), 255.

33 For valuable observations about the nature of the accompaniment and the relation of harp to voice see L. F. Anderson, *The Anglo-Saxon Scop* (Toronto, 1903), 39–40, and John C. Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf* (New Haven, 1942), 94.

34 See Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century*, 13; cf. Dorothy Whitelock, *The Audience of Beowulf* (Oxford, 1951), 20.

35 Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century*, 13. The observation that the poem "lacks the packed dramatic intensity which is characteristic of the lays" is true of plot but not of verse; and if the verse is exciting to *hear*, then the plot too will seem intense.

36 The chapters or cantos marked in the MS by Roman numbers can have had no relation to oral performance.

37 Francis P. Magoun, Jr., "Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry," *Speculum*, XXVIII (1953), 446–63.

38 Francis P. Magoun, Jr., "Bede's Story of Cædman: The Case History of an Anglo-Saxon Oral Singer," *Speculum*, XXX (1955), 49–63.

39 *The Shield of Achilles* (New York, 1955), 45–6.

40 Magoun, "Bede," 61. Cf. T. Miller, *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, E.E.T.S. (O. S.), 95, 96, 111 (1890–1898), 346.

41. *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, 51.

42 P. F. Baum, "The Meter of the *Beowulf*," *Modern Philology*, XLVI (1948), 80.

43 *Old English Versification* ["Trial Mimeographed Edition"] (New Haven, 1957), 36–7. Those who know Professor Pope's writings and have listened to his readings and discussions of Old English poetry will recognize how much the discussion in this essay owes to him; but he is not responsible for my interpretations of his theory.

44 Blair, *Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, 283–4.

45 *A Poet's Notebook* (London, 1944), 59.

46 W. C. Wright, ed., *Works of the Emperor Julian* (London, 1913), II, 421–3.

47 *Pearl*, ed. E. V. Gordon (Oxford, 1953), xxxiv.

48 Urban T. Holmes, Jr., *A History of Old French Literature* (New York, 1948), 228–9, and Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (Boston, 1933), chapters VIII–X, XIII.

THE MASKS OF ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN

F. W. Watt

> They who shall see me in that hour will ask
> What spirit or what fire could ever have been
> Within that yellow and discoloured mask. . . .
> ("Death," July, 1891)

Historical and biographical criticism are likely to remain the chief approaches to Canadian literature for some while to come—indeed, for as long as the soil continues to offer so small a return for more intensive forms of cultivation. It is a sign of vitality, however, that the easy generalizations and simple conclusions which were once possible are becoming more difficult to make. Canadian literature as it is now being written and Canadian literary history alike can no longer be exploited with impunity by the casual amateur. With the increase in complexity and difficulty comes a new sense of interest and relevance. Writers once thought of as safely and finally placed in the Canadian literary tradition are threatening (although serious "revaluations" remain unlikely) to re-emerge with new vitality. Among these Archibald Lampman, formerly pigeon-holed as a minor nature Romantic of the late-Victorian era, may yet come to be looked upon less as a mildly interesting fossil of an outlived colonial past than as a type of the Canadian writer and his continuing special problems in this country.

Archibald Lampman went to Ottawa in 1883 to take up a minor clerical position in the Post Office Department, and he remained at that post except for brief vacations until a short time before his death in 1899, at the age of thirty-eight. During these sixteen years he wrote the handful of mild and sensitive nature poems upon which largely depends his claim to be the best of nineteenth-century Canadian poets; and he led a life which was externally as contemplative and uneventful as the poems imply. In a memoir his close friend D. C. Scott remarked on how fortunate the poet was to receive, during most of his creative life, the security of that undemanding Civil Service post, and to live in the small though growing city of Ottawa, which still permitted easy access to the

rural scenes he so much loved. Yet from the evidence of letters and relatively unfamiliar parts of his prose and poetry, Lampman's life in Canada's capital city was not at all one of quiet fruitfulness, but on the contrary one of unrest, dissatisfaction often to the point of despair, and unresolved tension and conflict within himself and with the society in which he lived.

In the two years following his grateful acceptance of the Civil Service position (it relieved him of a brief and highly incompatible first career, that of school teacher), Lampman was complaining in letters to a friend[1] of a debilitating mood from which he could not escape and which was the opposite of contentment or happiness. He also referred in the letters to a curious species of writing he was attempting at this juncture:

> I am in the midst now of the barren period; I cannot work; I have been writing at a voluminous fairy tale—and have composed many sheets of very monotonous rubbish.—I can do nothing but saw wood. [Dec. 10, 1884]

> I have been very dull and out of spirits.—oppressed with innumerable things—debts; ill-success in everything, incapacity to write and want of any hopes of ever succeeding in it if I do. I cannot do anything—I believe I am the feeblest and most good-for nothing mortal any where living. . . . I wrote another fairy tale the other day—much to mother's disgust; who is unlimited in her complaints of the impractical and outlandish character of my writings, which indeed fetch no money—or even respect. As to the story I made it in a dull lifeless state of mind, so I dare say it is bad enough. . . .
>
> [Jan. 20, 1885]

In the first number of *Man* (Nov., 1885), the short-lived Ottawa periodical edited by Lampman's father-in-law, Dr. Edward Playter, there appeared what may well be a product of the kind of effort referred to in these letters, under the title "Hans Fingerhut's Frog Lesson." It has since been forgotten; but it contains what can be considered, though in the form of a fairy-tale, a symptom of Lampman's essential artistic and spiritual dilemma at a revealing moment, and as such it may prove worthy of examination even at some length.

In 1880, while still at Trinity College, Lampman had already shown a more than academic interest in the plight of certain exceptional men for whom, according to literary tradition, an unsympathetic society proved a cause of dangerous disillusionment. "What a delicate thing to be entrusted to this stern world's keeping is a poet's nature . . . ," he said in an essay on Shelley.[2] "How easily it may be spoiled, embittered, and turned away from truth in an unaided struggle with the unsympathetic coldness and heartless oppression of society. . . ." Shelley's was such a

nature, and Lampman described him as one who for this reason became a "pure worshipper of nature"; "his mind turned in weariness from the contemplation of what he had already seen of the deep-rooted evils of the world's society to a groping search [in nature] after truth." "Hans Fingerhut's Frog Lesson" tells of an experience in several respects not unlike this, but significantly only a hint or two is given in it of the existence of "evils of the world's society." In Lampman's story, as we shall see, the poet Hans Fingerhut is made to take upon his own shoulders all the responsibility for his alienation from the community.

The mythological pattern of the tale is familiar—that of a hero's separation or withdrawal from the world, his initiation into mysteries, and his return to society. "Long ago," it begins, "almost out of recollection, there lived in a small town in a woody German valley a poet named Hans Fingerhut." Hans, like Lampman himself, experienced a disappointing lack of success in his vocation. As a consequence the German's poems "began to grow peevish and querulous, and men would no longer listen to them as they had done to the fresh and joyous ones of his youth." This response only made him angrier, and now he "shrieked and thundered with songs full of wrath and bitterness," bringing ruin upon himself, for "the great people turned him from their gates." He then was obliged to set himself up as a tailor in order to support himself. "All day he sewed and stitched, and scowled at the passers by, and half the night he wandered about the streets, scrawling satires on the gates of all whom the people honoured." What relation this picture had to Lampman himself, chained to the drudgery of the Post Office clerkship of which he so often complained, is not difficult to see, and easier still with the details that follow:

> Often as he sat and sewed, great songs seemed to come to him, beautiful visions and thoughts that dawned on him and sought to combine with the restless melody in his soul; but the remembrance of his disappointments and forlorn condition always turned them into chants so dreadful and ferocious that little children were afraid to pass his door.

Not unexpectedly Hans turned to the countryside for comfort, but he was so much at odds with his world that even the beauty of nature seemed to mock him. In a rage he tried to silence the music of a stream by which he had paused, and thereby he offended its guardian elf. A gesture from the elf, and Hans was transformed into that raucous and discordant creature, the frog, until he could learn to interpret correctly the "song of the stream" he had tried to destroy. The frog's life, he dis-

covered, is miserable, precarious, and painful. Even his fellow frogs, with whom he joined in stridently objecting to their lot, were alienated from him:

> The other frogs would have nothing to do with him; nay, even sat sometimes and abused him. For there was something uncanny about Hans Fingerhut. He talked often to himself in a tongue unknown to them. Sometimes he wept in silence—a thing which astonished them very much, for no other frogs could weep. . . .

At last, after all Hans's interpretations of the song proved to be wrong, the elf relented in pity, and Hans's own tears became fairies that sang the song to him in a language he could understand. The story's somewhat anti-climactic turning point, the "Song of the Water Drops," is an expression of cosmic optimism based on a stoical acceptance of one's lot and faith in Nature's maternal purposes. Once free, Hans took this new faith back with him to the town, where his life was transformed by it:

> He no longer walked with his usual defiant stride, downcast face and scowling brow. The portly figures and round faces of the busy burghers, and the well-filled purses at their girdles no longer made him fierce and envious, but he greeted them all with a quiet and pleasant "good morning". . . . But from that day the great songs that he made were nothing like his former ones. There was never anything bitter or complaining in them. They were all sweet and beautiful and wise.

The tale of Hans Fingerhut concludes with a consummation not achieved in Lampman's own life; and there is, as we shall see, stronger proof of this than the very relevant description D. C. Scott gives in his memoir of Lampman's normal physical bearing: "In the city, he walked habitually with a downcast glance, with his eyes fixed upon the ground; in the fields and woods he was alert and observant." But undoubtedly Lampman's continual resort to the natural world was in its own way, as he said of Shelley, "a groping search after truth." Hope of success led him to that intense concentration of detail and mood in his nature poems which is their best quality; but the obvious failure in that search makes their limitation. On the other hand, he was not always ready to assume the whole burden of his recurring sense of alienation from his society. Unlike Hans, Lampman often felt the need for regeneration not only of himself, but of the social order as well, and when he did so it was not easy to settle the conflict within himself and with his society by a simple fairy-tale resolution.

Lampman's response to the world or even to the world of nature was

always more varied and complex than the modest, sensitive, meticulous craftsmanship of his few best nature poems, such as "Heat," "In November," "A Sunset at Les Eboulements," would alone suggest. It is true, as these poems show, that he continually turned to rural scenes as the simplest kind of anodyne or release, but at other times he gave nature a more important rôle: she is shown in some poems as holding the key to moral laws which man, fallen from harmony with her, has lost and can find again only in communion with her. The belated Romanticism of this view must be called wilful rather than ignorant, for Lampman's "Man and Nature" asserts this faith in language which deliberately opposes the attack made by Matthew Arnold on the Romantic philosophy of nature—"Nature and man can never be fast friends. . . ." Lampman wrote:

> That only which is nature's friend shall find
> Beauty's firm law and follow it aright;
> But long ago the children of mankind
> Abandoned nature and sought other light,
> Made their own Gods, endowed with other power
> And beauty left them at the self-same hour.

Whatever the theological status of "beauty," Lampman has here joined in the challenge of the Romantic and the radical to institutional religion. In a letter to E. W. Thomson on November 2, 1897, Lampman expressed his revulsion against institutional religion more bluntly, while admitting that his contacts with it were purposely rare, "about three times a year":

> It always depresses me to go to church. In those prayers and terrible hymns of our service we are in the presence of all the suffering in the world since the beginning of time. . . . Sunday is a day that drives me almost to madness. The prim black and collars, the artificial dress of the women, the slow trouping to church, the bells, the silence, the dreariness, the occasional knots of sallow and unhealthy zealots whom one may meet at street corners whining over some awful point in theology,—all that gradually presses me down till by Sunday night I am in despair and would fain issue forth with pot and brush and colour the town crimson.[3]

Despite the mild bravado of the last phrase, it was the countryside around Ottawa rather than the wilder diversions of the city itself that typically offered Lampman a release from the excessive pieties of Victorian Canada. And the poet sometimes believed that by communion with the natural world he could escape not only these, but also all the more sordid aspects of the modern industrial and commercial civilization.

"Freedom" states this more general attitude with a revealing explicitness:

> Out of the heart of the city . . . ,
> Out of the heat of the usurer's hold,
> From the horrible crash of the strong man's feet;
> Out of the shadow where pity is dying;
> Out of the clamour where beauty is lying,
> Dead in the depth of the struggle for gold;
> Out of the din and the glare of the street;
>
> Into the arms of our mother we come,
> Our broad strong mother, the innocent earth,
> Mother of all things beautiful, blameless. . . .

"Innocent" and "blameless" and their like were favourite adjectives with Lampman. Against the dull, ugly, evil life of men, especially men caught in the condition of expanding industrial urbanism, Lampman opposed the archetypal sanctuary of innocence he still saw in nature beyond the borders of the cities. In "Favourites of Pan," the best record of this prelapsarian creed, the frogs can speak with the notes of the god Pan to those who wander "far from the noise of cities and the strife"; and those who listen are carried back to the first idyllic scene:

> . . . they that hear them are renewed
> By knowledge in some god-like touch conveyed,
> Entering again into the eternal mood
> Wherein the world was made.

More than a few of Lampman's contemporaries, impelled no doubt by some of the same forces, sought through nature to enter the peaceful land of Eden. Wilfred Campbell, for example, in his poem "In the River Bay," looks for a refuge from "The new desire and old regret, /The doubt, the sorrow, and the curse, /The passions that our spirits nurse. . . ." He wishes,

> Refined, removed of all earth's dross,
> Its strife, its sorrow, and its loss,
> To be a little child for aye,
> Mist-cradled in this river-fay.
>
> (*Lake Lyrics,* 1889, 33–4)

That other pleasant country, paradoxically not far distant from Eden for some writers—Bohemia—attracted relatively few Canadians; and the Bohemianism of Carman and Roberts was certainly no serious threat to respectability. But Lampman was too restrained and too fastidious

to relax his moral tensions even with, for example, the innocuous gusto of such a poem as Carman's "Isabel," in which the note of burlesque is prominent but apparently quite unconscious:

> In her body's perfect sweet
> Suppleness and languor meet,—
> Arms that move like lapsing billows
> Breasts the Love would make his pillows,
> Eyes where vision melts in bliss,
> Lips that ripen to a kiss.
> (*Songs from Vagabondia,* 1894, 29)

Finding his consolations in the natural world, Lampman preferred to speak of easing the coils of human relations in a more decorous and oblique fashion. Thus his unobjectionable apostrophe "To a Flower" gives thanks that "I may come at any hour / And take thy beauty without fear":

> Thou hast no human smile to bless,
> And not with tears thine eyes are wet;
> But I may love thee and caress,
> Without reproach, without regret.

Lampman differed in another way from those late nineteenth-century Canadian poets who at times slipped away from society into the delectable kingdoms of Eden or Bohemia: for him such an escape created a far greater degree of tension. He often felt a longing not to escape or withdraw but to enter more fully the everyday world of modern urban civilization. "I envy you to a certain extent your *active life*," he wrote to his college friend, the Reverend C. H. Shortt, "and I yearn for something of this kind in a dim way, as one of those Kentucky cave creatures, with their degenerated eyes might yearn for the faculty of sight." And he sometimes expressed regret at his lack of knowledge of politics and his inability to take a direct political rôle.[4] Far from being "somewhat indifferent to the social and economic currents about him," as E. K. Brown has suggested,[5] Lampman appears to have been interested to the point of fascination in the industrial urban conditions of his environment and all they entailed. His poetry shows him not merely rejecting them—though he obviously did this at times, as the traditional view of him suggests—but also coping with and trying to understand them. The latter response can be seen plainly in such poems as "A Night of Storm," which ends after its description of the city during a storm in an apostrophe that shifts the focus from the violence of nature to the violence of human suffering:

City of storm, in whose grey heart are hidden
What stormier woes, what lives that groan and beat,
Stern and thin-cheeked, against time's heavier sleet,
Rude fates, hard hearts, and prisoning poverty.

"The Railway Station" shows in a similar way that the poet was reaching out in sympathy to the lives of the city dwellers he only dimly glimpsed. The poem describes a train as it pulls out of the station:

So many souls within its dim recesses,
So many bright, so many mournful eyes:
Mine eyes that watch grow fixed with dreams and guesses;
What threads of life, what hidden histories,
What sweet or passionate dreams and dark distresses,
What unknown thoughts, what various agonies!

More interesting than these is the poem called "The City," in which Lampman exhibits, one could argue, a work of peculiarly twentieth-century sensibility struggling for birth in the womb of a nineteenth-century poetic technique:

I see the crowds for ever
Go by with hurrying feet;
Through doors that darken never
I hear the engines beat.

Through days and nights that follow
The hidden mill-wheel strains;
In the midnight's windy hollow
I hear the roar of trains. . . .

Ah! the crowds that for ever are flowing—
They neither laugh nor weep—
I see them coming and going,
Like things that move in sleep.

"A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many," is perhaps only a step or two away in intention, but Lampman's is an "Unreal City" in the wrong sense. If the attempt was to convey an impression of what was to him ugly, incongruous, but fascinating in the urban scene, the effect is inappropriately one of archaism and uneasy elevation—as in these lines from the same poem which presumably refer to the city's discordant night-life: "And the guest-hall boometh and shrilleth, / With the dance's mocking sound." Lampman possessed none of the techniques of naturalism, realism, or irony and he was both prepared and encouraged to write in a quite different mode. For this reason his most successful

poem on the urban theme is cast in the lurid, melodramatic vein of James Thomson's "City of Dreadful Night." In Lampman's "The City of the End of Things" the perceptual phenomena of the modern city are presented not at all naturalistically, but are transformed into a symbolic vision or nightmare:

> . . . in its murky streets far down
> A flaming terrible and bright
> Shakes all the stalking shadows there,
> Across the walls, across the floors,
> And shifts upon the upper air
> From out a thousand furnace doors;
> And all the while an awful sound
> Keeps roaring on continually. . . .

The decay of spirit and humanity which takes place in the "city of the end of things" remains somewhat mysterious. But the relevance to Lampman's own problems as a poet is acute if we see in the "grim Idiot at the gate," sole survivor of the cursed city, "deathless and eternal there," Lampman's figuring of the creative spirit of the artist in the sterile condition to which the nightmare of rampant industrial urbanism might one day reduce it. The city portrayed in this way, in "its grim grandeur," is a potent symbol, but the effect is gained by the sacrifice of a good deal of the complexity of Lampman's feeling towards urbanism. It has the power and the weakness of a gross oversimplification. Whereas the countryside was at times simply Eden, the city has here become the antithetical kingdom of Hell.

There remain two other reactions of Lampman to industrial urban civilization to be considered; the first of these points to the poet's ideological position, and is to be found in the extensive utopian vision, "The Land of Pallas." The Land of Pallas is a familiar ideal, an egalitarian, communistic, peaceful, unchanging land of brotherly love, a nowhere more like Morris's than Butler's, though with characteristics of both. In Lampman's Utopia "all the earth was common," as Henry George in the 'eighties and 'nineties was insisting it should be, and there is community of ownership: "all the store of all to each man was his own." Both city and countryside are places of beauty. But it is evident from the poet's description that the reason lies partly in the agrarian nature of the economy; for his idyllic society bases its livelihood not on industry but on the land. Lampman's Adamite inclination is obvious, too, in the poet's depiction of the State: it is anarchistic, relying for social order on the gospel rather than on the law:

> . . . there was no prison, power of arms, nor palace,
> Where prince or judge held sway, for none was needed there. . . .
>
> And there were no bonds of contract, deed or marriage,
> No oath, nor any form, to make the word more sure,
> For no man dreamed of hurt, dishonour, or miscarriage. . . .

Returning after his stay in this land the narrator attempted to preach to his fellows the lessons it taught him, but understandably he "preached but fruitlessly; the powerful from their stations / Rebuked [him] as an anarch, envious and bad. . . ." Lampman wrote two endings for the poem, one more pessimistic and harsh than the other:

> Then I returned upon my footsteps madly guessing,
> And many a day thereafter with feet sad and sore
> I sought to win me back into that land of blessing,
> But I had lost my way, nor could I find it more.

The narrator's initiation was evidently more disturbing and more demanding than Hans Fingerhut's. The published version of the poem, though not altogether emphatically or clearly, avoids such despair by endorsing the "idea of progress":

> And still I preached, and wrought, and still I bore my message,
> For well I knew that on and upward without cease
> The spirit works for ever, and by Faith and Presage
> That somehow yet the end of human life is Peace.

The contrast between the Land of Pallas and the world in which he led his daily life—even when the latter was seen by the faint glow of attenuated optimism—was a sharp and bitter one for Lampman. Coming out of the Land of Pallas the narrator tells us he saw

> A land of baser men, whose coming and whose going
> Were urged by fear, and hunger, and the curse of greed.
>
> I saw the proud and fortunate go by me, faring
> In fatness and fine robes, the poor oppressing and slow,
> The faces of bowed men, and piteous women bearing
> The burden of perpetual sorrow and the stamp of woe.

In another class of poems Lampman provided harsh critiques of this land, contemporary society at its worst, which are as remote from the utopian idealizations of "The Land of Pallas" as they are from the negative utopianism, so to speak, of "The City of the End of Things." In poems like "The Modern Politician," "Liberty," "To a Millionaire," "Epitaph on a Rich Man," and "The Usurer," criticism of what he takes to be features of his own society is more directly applied. "What

manner of soul is his," he exclaimed in his attack on the "modern politician," "to whom high truth / Is but the plaything of a feverish hour, / A dangling ladder to the ghost of power!" His is the "age of brass," the time of the "rich man" who

> . . . made himself a great name in his day,
> A glittering fellow on the world's hard way,
> He tilled and seeded and reaped plentifully
> From the black soil of human misery;—
> He won great riches, and they buried him
> With splendour that the people's want makes grim;
> But some day he shall not be called to mind
> Save as the curse and pestilence of his kind.

Lampman's detestation of the new plutocracy of industrial civilization is apparent also in the conclusion of the sonnet "To a Millionaire," where he holds the object of attack responsible for

> . . . the unnumbered broken hearts
> The hunger and the mortal strife for bread,
> Old age and youth alike mistaught, misfed,
> By wants and rags and homelessness made vile,
> The griefs and hates, and all the meaner parts
> That balance thy one grim misgotten pile.

It is understandable that Archibald Lampman, with his utopian visions of a finer social order and his critical sense of the shortcomings of his own society, should have felt himself estranged from many of his fellow Canadians, especially in the 'eighties and 'nineties when national ideals tended to predominate over all others. Lampman was unwilling to seek popularity among the more enthusiastic Canadian nationalists. "At this time," he observed quietly in a public lecture in 1891, "when our country's destiny, its very independent existence perhaps, is a matter of doubt and anxiety, it behoves us to be silent and do no boasting, but look seriously about us for the wisest thing to be said and done at each crisis."[6] He was incapable of the patriotic fervour which inspired a writer like Charles G. D. Roberts. "In the midst of our present political conditions," Lampman wrote a year later in his *Globe causerie*, "Mr. Roberts in his patriotic vein is a voice crying in the wilderness, and he seems to have set himself in a premeditated pose to cry there with all his might. . . . It seems to me, however, that the times can hardly carry patriotic verse, particularly of a boastful character. Satire would appear to be the species of verse most applicable to the present emergency."[7]

Although Lampman himself to a considerable degree had the dis-

position and felt the desire to conform, the pressures brought to bear upon him by his *milieu* to subdue his more bitter and more radical responses were still greater. It was a rare critic who could interpret Lampman's heretical poems in a way which suggested positive virtues without denying their essential motivation. W. D. Lighthall was one of these. In his journal *Horizon* (no. 1, 1903), which was as shortlived as its motto would have led one to expect—"A journal without Pretentions, Prejudices, or Promises"—he praised Lampman for refusing to "bow the knee to mammon" and asserted boldly, "Lampman keenly felt the need of new national ideals in our country, and half consciously pictures the Canada-to-Be in 'The Land of Pallas'." The typical critical attitude to Lampman's poetry in his own day was one of encouragement for its mildness and its decorous restraint. "There is an absence of the erotic," wrote Seranus in the *Week*, "of the merely sensuous and vivid, of passion and colour and warmth for their own sakes—the sin of the modern school—for which the reader is thankful." And later, "A more startling, more strictly original note might not leave so pleasant an impression, so potent a sense of calm powers undisturbed by all the rude shocks of fate." (VI, 1888, 59.) To a passionate and deeply disturbed poet this attitude was calculated to be depressing. Equally dampening to certain aspects of Lampman's inspiration, particularly his radical ardour, must have been the eulogy of his poetry in the *Week*'s series, "Prominent Canadians," to which honoured *élite* Lampman was raised in 1891:

> Assuredly there is at times in some of the poems an unmistakable undertone of wistful regret for the prisoned fate of the liberty-loving spirit but this is by no means akin to the senseless ravings of shallower minds against the unpropitious environment of circumstances; and is far from vexing the general serenity of the poet's even temperament. He accepts life as he finds it, and leaves the madness of attempting to remake the world to fools who have no better task in hand. [VIII, 1891, 299]

The commentary tells us more about its author and the author's *milieu* than it does about Lampman, but it helps to illuminate the kinds of tension which Lampman endured while trying to discover and express "reality" as he experienced it. The easiest course was not to write poems which would prove disturbing, or at least not to publish them. This he did, by choice or necessity, in the case of a number of his poems. A good example is "The True Life," written in 1894, three years after he became a "prominent Canadian" and one year before his election to the Royal Society, but published for the first time in *At the Long Sault* in 1943:

This life is a depressing compromise
Between the soul and what it wills to do
And what your careful neighbours plan for you,
Often the thing most odious in your eyes,
A makeshift truce. . . .
O, world of little men, how sweet a thing
The true life is, what strength and joy it hath,
What grandeur and what beauty it might bring,
Could we but sweep forever from our path
Your cant rules and your casuistries,
Your clap-trap, and your damned hypocrisies.

An alternative to which Lampman resorted on another occasion effectively illustrates his problem. The *Globe causerie* of June 4, 1892, contains the poems "Falling Asleep" and "Reality," the latter (not elsewhere printed until recently) being in a bitter, sardonic mood the opposite of current ideas of the "poetical" and of the morally respectable. Lampman, it appears, sought to avoid a direct affronting of opinion by framing the poems in a short dramatic scene in which he attributes them to a mysterious friend who comes to visit him. "[My friend the sonneteer] knows in what abhorrence I hold those persons—so exasperatingly numerous in our time—who profane and misapply the sonnet, and he takes a sort of inhuman delight in torturing me with sonnets of his own composition on all sorts of flippant and improper subjects." The first sonnet is an introspective examination of the process indicated in its title, "Falling Asleep." After hearing it, Lampman says, he had the following conversation:

"Well," I said, "that doesn't seem to be so bad—in a certain sense, from a certain point of view—rather true to life, quite picturesque in fact—but could you not have arranged to cast your impression in some more suitable form a little less ridiculously inapplicable to the smallness and homeliness of your subject?" "No I couldn't," answered my friend, fixing me with a defiant glare. "The best way to impress your subject on the reader is to cast it in a totally unsuitable form. It's the contrast that does it, you know," and he took up the other paper, and read the following utterly atrocious and impudent production:—

Reality

I stand at noon upon the heated flags
At the bleached crossing of two streets, and dream,
With brain scarce conscious, how the hurrying stream
Of noonday passengers is done. Two hags
Stand at an open doorway piled with bags
And jabber hideously. Just at their feet
A small, half-naked child screams in the street.
A blind man yonder, a mere hunch of rags,

> Keeps the scant shadow of the eaves, and scowls,
> Counting his coppers. Through the open glare
> Thunders an empty waggon, from whose trail
> A lean dog shoots into the startled square,
> Wildly revolves and soothes its hapless tail,
> Piercing the noon with intermittent howls.

"Certainly you have outdone yourself this time," I cried. "You have violated every law of moral dignity and literary decency" . . . The poor fellow has talent if he would only apply it in a serious and sensible way.

It is obvious that Lampman was not so scandalized by his friend the sonneteer, his *alter ego,* his Satanic spirit, or whoever he was, as a literal reading of the scene would suggest; he perhaps regretted that decorum would not allow longer and more fruitful visits. At any rate he allowed the second sonnet to stand in his manuscript book without any special apologies. The poet of "Reality," given the opportunity, might possibly have shown the way to a new poetic technique or to the mask that could have released Lampman's creative energies from the inhibitions of self and society by which they were plainly hampered. The figure of Hans Fingerhut, it will be evident by now, was just the opposite kind of mask. Hans was evidently a creation of Lampman's deepest despair and self-condemnation and his desire for peace of mind, and could not be more to him than what he once called

> A makeshift truce, whereby the soul denies
> The birthright of a being bright and new
> Puts on a mask and crushes down the true,
> And lolls behind a fence of courteous lies.
> ("The True Life")

In such a mood Lampman accepted a view of poet and society which significant parts of his work belie. In the fairy-tale world of Hans, the poet displayed, not radical antagonisms to social evils, but simply envy of people more favoured; Hans's need was to find a way of conforming to that world as it was, not to try to remake it or to go beyond it. This was, in fact, the mask which Lampman's own mildness and the attitude of the intellectual *milieu* for which he wrote encouraged him to wear, all the more because his turning away from contemporary society and his quest for some arcanal, saving knowledge in the natural world produced a group of excellent nature poems.

Lampman's reactions neither to nature nor to the growing industrial urban civilization of his day could be contained within the *persona* of Hans Fingerhut, but he found no more adequate alternative. "In the

wider politics," D. C. Scott said of him, "he was on the side of socialism and reasonable propaganda to that end, and announced his belief and argued it with courage whenever necessary."[8] His interest in radical ideas, however, found little encouragement in the predominantly conservative *milieu* of the 'eighties and 'nineties, and so he was able to do little more than begin to explore naïvely this avenue of approach to the subject-matter of city life which attracted him. The tools or weapons of radicalism, along with those of naturalism (which offended the moral idealism of his society), were largely denied him, and his intellectual capacities and his social insights were that much the weaker. Ultimately, although he seems never to have abandoned the costly effort to understand and give poetic form to his experience in the contemporary world, Lampman was tempted—when the opiate of the natural world failed him as it often did—to place his faith in the kind of apocalyptic dream that would reconcile radical idealism with conservative necessity. "If, all at once," he wrote in the *Globe* in 1892, "through some strange moral awakening, men could be got to see the miserable emptiness and vulgarity of the desire for riches, the work of the social and political reformer would be made beautifully straight before him, and all things would adjust themselves to the ideal plan . . ." (Sept. 24). To this high and distant hope both the poet of nature and the utopian socialist could return from time to time to rest in an uneasy compromise.

It is impossible to know how aware Lampman himself was of the self-contradictions and vacillations which, it appears, he continued to endure throughout his sixteen years in Ottawa; but there is no doubt that what he saw as a lack of rigorous intellectual challenge and free play of thought in his *milieu* consciously troubled him. "The human mind is like a plant," he remarked in the *Globe causerie* of August 27, 1892, "it blossoms in order to be fertilized, and to bear seed it must come into actual contact with the mental dispersion of others." The Canadian writer, however, "must depend solely upon himself and nature. He is almost without . . . that force and variety of stimulus which counts for so much in the fructification of ideas." Lampman seemed to recognize that his experience in Canada was not unique, but the lot of most writers living in a society where dialectic was discouraged, and in a terrain where nature's simplicities and society's growing complexities stood in vivid juxtaposition. Today Canadian writers have long since turned to new forms of thought and poetic expression, but they can still be found impaled on the horns of the familiar dilemma with which the earlier poet struggled. Lampman was not speaking for himself alone

when he epitomized that dilemma with such neatness and sadness in this four line poem left forgotten in his manuscript book of 1892:

> Earth, heaven, and the mighty whole—
> I scan them and forget the strife;
> 'Tis when I read the human soul
> A darkness passes upon life.[9]

NOTES

1 Letters to Mrs. J. M. McKeggie, Trinity College Library.

2 *Rouge et Noir*, I, no. 4 (December, 1880).

3 *Archibald Lampman's Letters to Edward William Thomson (1890–1898)*, ed. Arthur S. Bourinot (1956).

4 Letters to the Reverend C. H. Shortt, Trinity College Library.

5 *At the Long Sault* (1943), xvi.

6 Edited by E. K. Brown, in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XIII (July, 1944), 407.

7 "At the Mermaid Inn" (Nov. 19, 1892).

8 Preface to the Memorial Edition of Lampman's poems (1900).

9 Lampman MSS, Poems, 1889–92, University of Toronto Library.

BERNARD SHAW: IMPERFECT WAGNERITE

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The century of Wagnerism was the Shavian century. Date it from Bernard Shaw's birth in 1856 and it need only be stretched a few years from his death to the death of Thomas Mann in 1956. Its hours of noon were, like Shaw's, the decades on either side of 1900. Now, with the departure of Shaw and Mann, though there are still a few pockets of resistance left (like W. H. Auden and C. S. Lewis), Wagnerism as a literary phenomenon may be said to have passed utterly into history. T. S. Eliot let Wagner loom large in *The Waste Land*, but that was 1921, and he has remained silent on the subject since, unless the One-Eyed Reilly is Wotan in disguise.

The sunset of Wagner's influence in politics, music, and literature has been protracted. Quite naturally, a great many persons who suffered the political passions of the 1930's or took action in the War formed deep anti-Wagnerian prejudices and convictions. Hitler's infatuation for Wagner was, to use a favourite phrase of the time, no accident. Sir Ernest MacMillan well expresses the state of opinion and feeling at the outbreak of war:

> From the time that I first saw Hitler at Bayreuth in 1933 I have felt a perverted Wagnerism in almost all his actions and speeches. Like Wagner, he must be forever explaining himself, and his speeches suggest a parody of Wagnerian music, with their fluent spate of sound, their constant reiteration of the same leading motifs and their continually rising climaxes. Furthermore, his elaborate staging of those speeches is Wagnerism in its splendour, and in the monumental party rallies and similar national occasions the artist in him is seen in its most impressive and most dangerous aspects.[1]

Jacques Barzun, Peter Viereck, and Leo Stein[2] have since examined the politics of Wagnerism at length, and Wagner has emerged after their scrutiny less a giant than an ogre. Those gifted with discernment of spirits have found Bayreuth even after the War still haunted by the Nazi pandemonium.

But this adverse judgment upon Wagner from a political and moral point of view had already been preceded by the normal reaction against his long dominance in the world of music. In the brighter, thinner air after the First World War, the *Meister*'s music must have sounded, did sound, grandiose, mid-Victorian, heavy, pretentious, unironic, unamusing. And with the approach and arrival of the Second World War, it became apparent in the West that his mythology and mystique had a deadly sting in it.

What André Gide had been almost alone in thinking in 1908 was to become received opinion in 1938:

> I hold the person and the work of Wagner in horror; my passionate aversion has grown steadily since my childhood. This amazing genius does not exalt so much as he *crushes*. He permitted a large number of snobs, of literary people, and of fools to think that they loved music, and a few artists to think that genius can be acquired. Germany has perhaps never produced anything at once so great and so barbarous.[3]

"Snobs, literary people and fools"—that must at the time have seemed a waspish judgment of the great Wagnerites of literature, though such has been the reaction since that it occasions little surprise now. And yet, if we pause for a moment to compile a catalogue of Wagnerites among writers alone—writers who have either championed Wagner's music and ideas or have employed some of the characteristic techniques of the "Art-work of the Future"—we confront a long and impressive list, including as it must the names of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Eliot among the poets, and Proust, Lawrence, and Joyce among the novelists. Add to these the last Wagnerites, Bernard Shaw and Thomas Mann, and we have a great proportion of the chief names of modern letters. In fact, as I look at the subject more closely, I am inclined to say that the impact of Wagner on literature has been so enormous that we are only now recovering sufficiently to see what hit us.

In the English-speaking world Bernard Shaw must be given first place in the company of Wagner's champions and interpreters. How perfect his Wagnerism was, however, can be decided only after some examination.

Bernard Shaw arrived in London from Dublin as a young man in time to hear Wagner himself, on his last visit to England, conduct the London Philharmonic. He had already been introduced to Wagner's music by his friend Chichester Bell; and when he opened the score of *Lohengrin*, he was already prepared for the "revolutionary discovery" of the "first work of Wagner's that really conquered the world and changed the face of music for us," having been brought up in a musical

household on the composers that Wagner knew and had reacted against. A minor skirmish of the great battle between Wagner and his enemies was fought in the Shaw family; and G. B. S. later looked back with compunction on his having shattered his mother's nerves and ideals by hammering out Wagner on the piano. He was, however, quite wrong in his old age—whether forgetful or teasing we cannot know—in asserting to his neighbour Mr. Winsten that it was he who had "put Wagner on the map."[4]

Actually, by the time of Wagner's visit in 1877, the conflict between musical Wagnerites and anti-Wagnerites was over, with the Wagnerites everywhere triumphant, for the time at least. Shaw was to be not among the first but among the last major critics to champion the music as new and revolutionary. When Wagner died in 1883, some ten thousand books and pamphlets and articles about him and his music had appeared in print. Even England had its Wagner Society, and young Bernard Shaw when he came to write his music criticism between 1888 and 1894 could count on the Wagnerism of the educated public. J. W. Davison, who was music critic of *The Times* for thirty years until his death in 1885, came to realize that his battle against Wagner was a losing one. A friend of Mendelssohn's, he attacked *Judaism in Music* with justification as "a narrow, intense and acrid pamphlet." On Wagner's visit to England in 1855 he observed that "the iconoclast, the revolutionist bent on demolishing the classical temples in order on their site to build up his own fame, the abuser of Jews, the detractor of Mendelssohn, was received with a mingled curiosity and excitement which further acquaintance increased." Davison was sent to Bayreuth at the opening of the Festspielhaus in 1876 "to record the triumph of the originator of an artistic cause he regarded as mortally hurtful to art." His account is, for one of his convictions, remarkably moderate in tone, being largely descriptive of the dramatic action, performers, and machinery—and of the discomforts of the town.[5]

The anti-Wagnerian opposition was broken; the Wagnerites of the first generation were completing their mission. After coming to England, Francis Hueffer (father of the critic and novelist Ford Madox Ford) had written a number of books partly or wholly about Wagner; and his survey of *Half a Century of Music in England* (1889) was dedicated—by permission, we may be sure—to Queen Victoria, "The Friend of Mendelssohn and the first Englishwoman to recognize the genius of Wagner."[6]

And so, while "Corno di Bassetto" and G. B. S. still had to agitate

for the production in England of the long delayed music dramas, the most pressing task was to impress on readers of musical journalism—some of whom doubtless lived in Horseback Hall and some in Heartbreak House—that Wagner had been a radical politician with a price on his head, and that *The Ring* will not give up its secrets if that fact is ignored. Looking back from the vantage-point of 1935, Shaw described Wagner as "then the furiously abused coming man in London";[7] perhaps so, but a younger showman had to work very hard to maintain, and to share, that distinction.

Certainly, if we look again at the criticism (surely among the best in existence), we find no tilting with Hanslick, no slaying of the slain. Corno di Bassetto comments on the death of the victorious Wagnerite, Dr. Hueffer, "fortunately, his warfare was accomplished before he fell." The first volume of *The Meister*, the publication of the English Wagner Society, was complete in the year 1888 when Hueffer died and Shaw began writing. He complains that "the editorial tone . . . is not Wagnerian: there is an evident indisposition to provoke hostility"; but he vigorously commends the translation of *Art and Revolution*, a political work of Wagner's "that no Socialist should be without." In these remarks he is attempting to stimulate and to nettle both the non-Wagnerian Socialists and the non-Socialist Wagnerians. With the Socialists he must be said to have failed: he never won over William Morris or persuaded the Fabian Society to publish Wagner's tracts. But with the Wagnerites he worked more persistently, and it is hard to believe that he provoked no sense of outrage when he demanded the "disestablishment of Bayreuth" and when a report that Madame Cosima Wagner intended to reserve *Parsifal* for performance in the Festival Theatre "almost reconciled him to the custom of suttee."[8]

Dropping his pseudonym and emerging as a regular critic writing under his own name, Shaw was even more clearly at work attempting to guard against the Wagnerian revolution's ending in a Thermidor. Though fallen among Fabians, he was enough of a Marxist to make large tactical concessions in order to save its essential gains. He writes, for instance:

> . . . in 1991 it will be seen quite clearly that Wagner was the end of the nineteenth-century, or Beethoven school, instead of the beginning of the twentieth-century school; just as Mozart's most perfect music is the last word of the eighteenth century, and not the first of the nineteenth.

So much for the slogan of "the Art-work of the Future." Later, he abandons it even more explicitly, along with the idea of *Gesamtkunst*:

Music, in fact, is now in revolt against the union of all the arts, since it has meant to her a ruthless exploitation not only by the poet and higher dramatist, but by the sensation-monger and pandar. She is now, like our revolting daughters and Doll's House Noras, insisting on being once more considered as an end in herself; and so the union of all the arts falls to pieces before Wagner's cement is dry, and his Art Work of the Future is already the art work of the past.

And, most iconoclastic of all, he casually confesses, apropos of having been bored as a child in church,

for this reason I do not in my inmost soul care for that large part of *Parsifal* which consists spectacularly of pure ritual, and musically of the feeling which ritual inspires in the genuine ritualist.[9]

In short, the Wagner who proclaimed a new despotism of all the arts, the magician of Bayreuth, the Wagner who made German romanticism massive and present to an international audience, an audience captive as no audience had ever been captive before—that was not the Wagner whom Bernard Shaw championed.

There remains Wagner the social thinker and, of course, Wagner the musician. While most of Shaw's purely musical criticism is devoted to other composers, it would be ungrateful not to recall his neat distinction between the true and the false *leitmotif*.[10] If we take the sentiment, "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," the true *leitmotif* will give musical expression to that feeling and will recur when the feeling is re-experienced or recalled: that is Wagner's way. The false *leitmotif* will consist of an allusion to food, an allusion to drink, and an allusion to death: that is the way of Wagner's duller imitators. This is music criticism of a high order, perceptive as Sir Donald Tovey is perceptive.

More usually, however, Wagner is for Shaw the occasion for discussing something for him even more urgent than music. We discern what this is when he writes about Wagner's book *Opera and Drama*:

Like all the books which have this mind-changing property—Buckle's History of Civilization, Marx's Capital, and Ruskin's Modern Painters are the first instances that occur to me—it professes to be an extra-ordinarily erudite criticism of contemporary institutions, and is really a work of pure imagination, in which a great mass of facts is so arranged as to reflect vividly the historical and philosophical generalizations of the author, the said generalizations being nothing more than an eminently thinkable arrangement of his own way of looking at things, having no objective validity at all, and owing its subjective validity and apparent persuasiveness to the fact that the rest of the world is coming round by mere natural growth to the author's feeling, and therefore wants "proof," historical, philosophical, moral, and so on, that it is "right" in its new view.[11]

Already, Shaw's Wagnerism is part of his religion of the Life Force, and is limited within its tenets.

To emphasize once more the continuity of Wagner criticism in England, let me again quote Dr. Hueffer. The persons in *The Ring*, he says:

> represent, in short, the pure symbols of primeval forces, while we are the compounds of consecutive generations. To bridge over this chasm, dividing the old age and the new, to strike that chord of purely human feeling which binds and blends men of all times and nations, is the work of the poet; for he alone is able to combine in his own nature the consciousness of modern thought with the intensity of prehistoric energy of action.

What Shaw does with such an account is to give it definiteness and political punch:

> Wagner's Nibelung Ring tetralogy may be called a philosophic music-drama, because the characters are dramatic personifications of the forces which are the subject-matter of metaphysics, the Pilgrim's Progress itself not being a more unmistakable allegory.[12]

Being Shaw, he could not leave this statement unexplained for long, and so in 1898, having left the vocation of music critic for that of dramatist, and being at leisure during a long convalescence, he wrote *The Perfect Wagnerite* to set down just what he meant in calling Wagner an allegorist. For all its basic seriousness a most sprightly and even effervescent work, it would be a good joke if someone took him at his word and produced it with solemn sumptuousness, like a prayer book. Superbly self-confident, it opens with an explanation of the dwarfs, giants, and gods of *Das Rheingold*, biologically as stages in the self-organization of life, sociologically as forces within capitalist society. To settle for anything else, he asserts, would be to reduce the whole thing to harlequinade, pantomime, fairy tale:

> The Ring, with all its gods and giants and dwarfs, its water-maidens and Valkyries, its wishing-cap, magic ring, enchanted sword, and miraculous treasure, is a drama of today, and not of remote and fabulous antiquity. It could not have been written before the second half of the nineteenth century, because it deals with events which were only then consummating themselves. Unless the spectator recognizes in it an image of the life he is himself fighting his way through, it must needs appear to him a monstrous development of the Christmas pantomime, spun out here and there into intolerable lengths of dull conversation by the principal baritone.[13]

The god Wotan, whose régime depends upon an uneasy combination of moral authority and mere privilege, needs to call in the services of

Loki, the intellectual or ideologue ("The Lie is a European Power," Lassalle had observed) in order to defeat the challenge of the new money-power embodied in the dwarf Alberich. Some of the details of interpretation are breathtaking in their audacity, or impudence, as for example the identification of the helmet of invisibility, the Tarnhelm, with a tall hat, which, as Shaw says:

> makes a man invisible as a shareholder, and changes him into various shapes, such as a pious Christian, a subscriber to hospitals, a benefactor of the poor, a model husband and father, a shrewd, practical independent Englishman, and what not, when he is really a pitiful parasite on the commonwealth, consuming a great deal and producing nothing, feeling nothing, knowing nothing. . . .[14]

At his most entertaining with *Das Rheingold,* he is at his most serious with *Siegfried.* His interpretation has good warrant in Wagner's own earlier writing: the composer's *Communication to my Friends* (1851) had described Siegfried as "the type of the true human being," whose form had appeared to him with the force of a revelation:

> In the struggle to give the wishes of my heart artistic shape, and in the ardour to discover what thing it was that drew me so resistlessly to the primal source of old home Sagas, I drove step by step into the deeper regions of antiquity, where at last to my delight, and truly in the utmost reaches of old time, I was to light upon the fair form of *Man,* in all the freshness of his force.[15]

It is only a short way from Wagner's text to Shaw's gloss, which speaks of Siegfried as "a type of the healthy man raised to perfect confidence in his own impulses by an intense and joyous vitality which is above fear, sickliness of conscience, malice, and the makeshifts and moral clutches of law and order which accompany them." He recognizes in the young hero "a totally unmoral person, a born anarchist, the ideal of Bakoonin, and anticipation of the 'overman' of Nietzsche"; and he concludes that "the most inevitable dramatic conception of the nineteenth century is that of the perfectly naïve hero upsetting religion, law and order in all directions, and establishing in their place the unfettered action of Humanity doing exactly what it likes, and producing order instead of confusion thereby because it likes to do what is necessary for the good of the race."[16] That last word "race" has a more sinister ring than Shaw intended: he meant, of course, nothing less than the human race.

It is a strong book, yet strangely partial—that is to say, partisan, and inadequate to its subject. It hedges a little in its sub-title—"A Com-

mentary on The Nibelung's Ring"—and that may excuse the fact that the composer of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, of *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger* and *Parsifal* hardly figures in its discussion. A more serious limitation is that, at the point when the young hero Siegfried successfully defies the old god Wotan, that is, before the cycle is three-quarters completed, Shaw in effect says, "At this point the *Meister* laid down his pen." Certainly, we might well wish that Shaw had laid down his, for as soon as he begins to recount the action of *Götterdämmerung*, he falls into the embarrassed facetious style of opera-intermission chit-chat. That sort of thing is more amusingly done in Anna Russell's skit.

For Friedrich Nietzsche, an earlier maverick Wagnerite, Shaw held a high regard as a *philosophe engagé* and fashioner of rousing and startling paradoxes, even though he wrote in a review of *Nietzsche contra Wagner*: "Not for a moment will I suffer anyone to compare me to him as a critic. Never was there a deafer, blinder, socially and politically inepter academician."[17] And yet, balancing the insouciance of the one against the hypertension of the other, we find the two judgments remarkably alike. Both reject Wagner's music-drama as a self-contained, self-consecrating, self-redeeming empire of art; both prefer to the despot of Bayreuth the younger Wagner with his struggle and sufferings; and both are displeased to find the religion of Life, in which they shared a large measure of belief, occluded in Wagner by a cult of Love and this in turn darkened by a "shadow of night and death."[18] The critical writings of Nietzsche and Shaw are calculated to produce Nietzscheans and Shavians, not Wagnerites.

Bernard Shaw spent so many of his younger years in championing (among other causes, and with what reservations we have observed) the music and ideas of Wagner that it is curious to observe how restricted is the influence of his Wagnerism on either the novels of his nonage or the dramatic works of his maturity.

The earliest of the novels has as its hero a decisive, intolerant young man, named Smith, who is fond of music; but the casual musical references are to *Les Huguenots* and to Berlioz—Wagner being merely mentioned once as in critical vogue. That novel, *Immaturity*, was written in 1879, two years after Wagner's last visit to England; the next, *The Irrational Knot* (1880), has no significant Wagnerian references, though its final chapter is clearly Ibsenite, and so one pole of the axis that Shaw did so much to establish is already operative. The musician-hero of *Love among the Artists* (1881) resembles Beethoven in appearance and manners, and echoes of the Wagnerite controversy, already voices

from the past, are heard in the "Antient Orpheus Society" when it debates whether to perform one of the young man's works. In *An Unsocial Socialist* (1883) the hero, who like his brethren in the earlier novels has no conscience and acts upon impulses disciplined by intelligence, preaches a doctrine of renunciation to a young woman in love with him, with true Wagnerian fullness and flow, only to dismiss it later as "romantic nonsense of the cheapest sort."

It was the author of these books that William Archer (himself the author of a book on Wagner, never published) described as he first saw him, in the reading room of the British Museum: "Day after day for weeks he had before him two books, which he studied alternately, if not simultaneously,—Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* and an orchestral score of *Tristan and Isolde*."[19] The music criticism that we have been considering was subsequent to that meeting, indeed ensued from it, for Archer noticed that the tawny-coloured man in his tawny-coloured clothes looked far from prosperous, and on making his acquaintance put him in line for the journalistic posts that were to occupy him until 1895.

The Shaw the world knows is the Shaw that left journalism for the theatre, and he entered dramatic work in the company of the same William Archer. They began collaboration on a play which appears in its first conception to have been derived from the allegory of *Das Rheingold*: "There was to be a garden scene on the banks of the Rhine, a capitalistic villain, tainted gold, and finally a grand gesture of throwing the tainted gold back into the Rhine."[20] Archer extricated himself in short order, and as we have it in Shaw's final version, *Widowers' Houses* opens on the banks of the Rhine and has to do with a rapacious Alberich of a slum landlord, but the Wagnerian survivals are shadowy, and the socialism is scientific not utopian.

Others of the plays were to continue a secondary concern of the criticism by passing satiric judgment on Wagnerism and the Wagnerites, from whom Shaw always dissociated Wagner—and himself. *The Sanity of Art* (1895) is Shaw's toughest piece of controversial prose. In it he breaks all the bones of one Max Nordau, who had written an excessively vulgar and pretentious book to prove to the satisfaction of any philistine that all the significant artists of the time, including Wagner and all his admirers, were examples of "degeneration." In reply Shaw roundly asserted that Wagner's "leading lay characteristic was his enormous common-sense."[21] But he could hardly have been unaware that such was not the mark of the *Yellow Book* Wagnerites who filled the concert halls and made pilgrimages to Bayreuth: indeed, that, applied to them,

Nordau's strictures had a base sort of validity. Certainly we have an oblique admission of this in the dramatic conception of Dubedat, the talented artist and charming rascal of *The Doctor's Dilemma*. He is described in a stage direction as "finding voluptuousness in languor and drama in death," and his self-indulgent flow of emotion is given Wagnerian colouring by the dying speech that follows:

> But Ive played the game: Ive fought the good fight. And now it's all over, theres an indescribable peace [*He feebly holds his hands and utters his creed*]: I believe in Michael Angelo, Velasquez, and Rembrandt; in the might of design, the mystery of colour, the redemption of all things by Beauty everlasting, and the message of Art that has made these hands blessed.[22]

Changing the names of musicians for those of painters, this is almost a direct translation of *An End in Paris*, a story by Richard Wagner.

In a little play about the suffragettes, *Press Cuttings* (1909), the dynamically and romantically wrong-headed anti-suffragette taunts the harassed male who happens to be Prime Minister by saying, "If you had to do without Wagner's music or do without your breakfast, you would do without Wagner."[23] Too much should not be made of this: Shaw classed the play among his "Tomfooleries."

Later, he revisited the Wagnerites for the last time in Heartbreak House, that garden of Klingsor "with Butler and Bergson and Scott Haldane alongside Blake and the other major poets on its shelves (to say nothing of Wagner and the tone poets)." *Heartbreak House* is Shaw's most subtle and elusive play; perhaps the musical term "chromatic" may be applied to it without straining the analogy. It presents a dramatic contrast between the voluptuous languor with which the people of the House, particularly the Hushabyes, savour and enjoy their sense of the end of all things and the coming of night, and the astringent reality both of the Captain's visions and of the actual dropping of the bombs. Shaw once said of Tristan: here at last is music for grown men; but he also said that Wagnerism may indicate no more than a love of stimulants in music. Clearly it is the second tone of feeling that is conveyed when Hesione says to Mangan (aestheticism to finance capitalism, to use Shaw's own kind of allegory): "Come, Alfred. There is a moon: it's like the night in Tristan and Isolde." And again it is Wagner whom Shaw brings to bear in judgment of the Wagnerites and the degeneracy-hunters, the cosmopolitans and the patriots, Heartbreak House and Horseback Hall:

the art of the dramatic poet knows no patriotism; recognizes no obligation but truth to natural history; cares not whether Germany or England perish; is ready to cry with Brynhild, "Lass uns verderben, lachend zu grunde geh'n" sooner than deceive or be deceived; and thus becomes in time of war a greater military danger than poison, steel, or trinitrotoluene.[24]

Here and here only, Shaw hesitated at the edge of accepting a tragic view of life very similar to that which he had rejected in *Götterdämmerung*. This unique moment of doubt gives the play its continuing mystery.

Of much greater importance in Shaw's plays is the recurrence of situations resembling the one in which the young Siegfried, fresh from his encounter with the Dragon, happy in the possession of Tarnhelm and Ring and in the prospect of winning Brünnhilde, meets an old man, actually his grandfather Wotan, who first with words and then with magic spear attempts to bar his way. Rude and boisterous in his self-assertion, Siegfried shatters the spear, careless of consequences to the power and life of the gods, and breaks through the ring of fire to his bride. Wotan, who is secretly pleased at the young hero's act of decision in thrusting him aside, disappears as an actor in the drama of world history and gravely awaits the end. In *The Perfect Wagnerite* Shaw retold the story of *The Ring* to make the action and all its significance converge on this one incident: after it, all the rest was grand opera. But we may also perceive a profound influence of the episode on the works of his creative imagination, from the earliest to the latest. "If the energy of life is still carrying human nature to higher and higher levels, then the more young people shock their elders and deride and discard their pet institutions the better for the hopes of the world, since the apparent growth of anarchy is the only measure of the rate of improvement."[25] For how many of Shaw's plays might that comment on the music drama serve as epigraph.

Pleasant or unpleasant, the situation is the same. Vivie Warren confronts her Mother, who resists first with sentimental authority (like maudlin Mime pretending to be both father and mother to Siegfried) and then with the sharper arguments of moral honesty, but is compelled at the end to give ground before youth and decision and to remove herself from her daughter's life. And the twins in *You Never Can Tell* likewise impose their wills upon their parents, this time by sheer breeziness and good nature. Two of the *Plays for Puritans* repeat the pattern with variations: the Devil's Disciple defies his Mother; Caesar

defies all constituted authority and without anxiety or regret obeys the dictates of his own will, which is the will of the Life Force in his age. *Fanny's First Play, Misalliance*, and *Getting Married* are all plays in which the younger generation successfully asserts itself, with the open or secret connivance of their elders.

In *Major Barbara*, however, Wotan's cannon proves to be of stronger material than the Salvation Army's drumstick, and it is Barbara who retires before Undershaft, youth that must accommodate itself to age. No longer is Shaw unequivocally joining the Butler of *The Way of All Flesh* and the Synge of *The Playboy of the Western World* (and the Wagner of *Siegfried*) in contributing to the rich literature of parricide. Thereafter, when he returns to "the most inevitable dramatic conception of the nineteenth century" it is with twentieth-century reservations.

Man and Superman, in an opening feint, throws Jack Tanner into opposition to Roebuck Ramsden; it has every appearance of being another and perhaps definitive statement of the theme. Novelty and force is what this Siegfried seems to have; but the force proves to be all Ann's, and as for novelty—the newness of Tanner's opinions has worn off, as Shaw doubtless knew it would, and they have now gone the way of Ramsden and the dodo. In the Preface there is something about "the heroism of daring to be the enemy of God," and the "Revolutionist's Handbook" exhibits some of this; but such is not the dramatic conflict upon which the play is built.

The Preface to *Back to Methuselah*, in which Shaw's progressivism reaches its high-water mark, mentions Wagner's *Ring* among other "reachings-forward to the new Vitalist art"; but in the play itself the stage is again set for a conflict between vital youth and authoritarian age, only for the effect to be deliberately dissipated. Young Cain holding a spear defies old Adam holding a spade, but the future is with neither, and when "the thing happens," we see the Life Force embodied not in young people but in old, not in naïve but in sophisticated, not in active but in contemplative. Life, not Love, is Shaw's religion; he and Wagner part company on this point of doctrine.

Defiance of the old by the young returns surreptitiously in the late play *On the Rocks*; and in *Geneva* Hitler himself, thinly disguised as Herr Battler, takes a Siegfried stance with the connivance of the aged playwright. Here, as in *The Simpleton* and most of the late plays, Shaw proves himself to be numb at the point of our own most agonized awareness. His revolutionary royalism, it may be noted in passing, is closer

to Wagner in his Dresden days than to Marx. And it is only fair to quote his sensible distinction, made in wartime, between Wagner and Hitler:

> Compare the careers of Phidias and Pisistratus or Richard Wagner and Adolf Hitler, and you will feel the difference. The honest artist does not pretend that his fictions are facts; but he may claim as I do that it is only through fiction that facts can be made instructive or even intelligible. But that is not the same as pretending that they are not fictitious. To work deliberately on the popular beliefs they create is one of the tricks of political rascality; but it is also a necessary art of honest statesmanship; for fools must be governed according to their folly and not to a wisdom they do not possess.[26]

It is interesting how often Shaw gives the act of defiance not to his heroes but to his heroines, those wasps without waists, as Max Beerbohm called them. In doing so, he carried over into the Siegfried pattern something of the effect of the end of *Die Walküre,* where Brünnhilde, who represents the true will and real self of her father Wotan, disobeys his express command in order to aid Siegmund and to preserve Sieglinde in childbirth. Barbara, until her defeat, seems more Undershaft than Undershaft himself, and Saint Joan is the spirit and embodiment of whatever is real in her time and country. And very late in his career, Shaw let his Black Girl, that intelligent woman armed with a knobkerry, knock down and end the reigns of a whole synod of gods.

This remains, however, largely a negative report. Nowhere in Shaw's work is there a trace of a *leitmotif* system: no feelings are allowed to attach to objects and precious few to persons. The action of a Shaw play leaps ahead and does not, like a Wagnerian music-drama, turn back on itself in recollection. Most of Shaw's plays are concise: where they are extended, as in *Back to Methuselah,* which has the massive proportions of *The Ring,* the scope is ample because an argument must be thrashed out, not because playwright and characters are borne on billows of endless melody. Shaw accepts the limitations of comic prose (except on those unhappy occasions when he tries without irony to soar to lyrical and impassioned heights), and the aesthetic empire-building expressed in the word *Gesamtkunst*—the composite of dramatic, poetic, scenic, and musical art—is foreign to him. Most important difference of all, Shaw's characters (even Adam and Eve and Lilith) are his contemporaries on the Fabian political platform; some of them may be retarded or out-of-date intellectually, but they do not belong to the timeless and internal antiquity of the mythmaker. In *Back to Methuselah* the movement from mythical to actual time is complete in the first few

minutes. Wagner needed as many hours for his vision of world history—and then never left his *graue Vorzeit*.

If Shaw did not build on Wagner's most distinctive achievements in artistic conception and technique, neither did he share many of his gravest failings—his racism, his religiosity, his profoundly boring philosophic pessimism, the strain of megalomania that permitted the formation around his person and achievement of a most unamiable cult. Shaw's ideas may be Northern and Teutonic—Marxist, Ibsenite, Nietzschean, Vitalistic, Wagnerite; but his art is classical—bright and cool as a Mediterranean winter.

Thomas Mann, who was increasingly a Shavian and decreasingly a Wagnerite, clearly perceived in Shaw "the born Thespian utterly lacking Wagner's sultry eroticism, with its out-heavening of Heaven, yet Wagner's true pupil as a maker of intellectual music and also as his own apostle and tireless commentator." He has special praise for *The Perfect Wagnerite* as "a work of shrewd lucidity that compares favourably with the burrowing flim-flam of German Wagner exegetists."[27] These very virtues were made possible by the imperfection of his Wagnerism. Wagner is, at least half the time, a poet of the night; with Shaw it is always daylight, and that is why, of all the Wagnerian figures, the solar-hero Siegfried alone shines through his pages.

NOTES

1 Sir Ernest MacMillan, "Hitler and Wagnerism," *Queen's Quarterly*, XLVIII (1941), 105.

2 Jacques Barzun, *Darwin, Marx, Wagner* (Boston, 1941); Leo Stein, *The Racial Thinking of Richard Wagner* (New York, 1950); Peter Viereck, *Metapolitics from the Romantics to Hitler* (New York, 1941).

3 *The Journals of André Gide*, tr. Justin O'Brien (New York, 1947), I, 224–5 (Jan. 25, 1908).

4 *London Music in 1888–89 as Heard by Corno di Bassetto* (London 1937), 26–8; S. Winsten, *Days with Bernard Shaw* (New York, 1949), 144. All references to works of Shaw are to the Uniform Edition (London: Constable, 1932——).

5 *From Mendelssohn to Wagner: Being the Memoirs of J. W. Davison Forty Years Music Critic of 'The Times,'* ed. Henry Davison (London, 1912), 115, 167 ff., 503 ff.

6 Franz [or Francis] Hueffer, *Richard Wagner and the Music of the Future* (1874); *Musical Studies* (Edinburgh, 1880); *Richard Wagner* (London, 1881); *Half a Century of Music in England 1837–1887* (London, 1889), especially chapter II, "Wagner in England."

7 *London Music*, 29.

8 *London Music*, 54, 48, 209, 210. Topsey growls about Wagner in *The Letters of William Morris to his Family and Friends*, ed. Philip Henderson (London, 1950), 60–1. Shaw confesses his failure with the Fabians in Edward R. Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society* (revised edition; London, 1926), Appendix.

9 *Music in London*, I, 295; III, 187, 154.

10 *Music in London*, III, 193.

11 *Music in London*, III, 77.

12 Hueffer, *Musical Studies*, 131; Shaw, *Music in London*, II, 118.

13 "The Perfect Wagnerite," in *Major Critical Essays*, 174, 167; also *Music in London*, II, 127.

14 *Major Critical Essays*, 176, 179.

15 Richard Wagner, *Prose Works*, tr. W. Ashton Ellis (London, 1893), I, 357–8.

16 *Major Critical Essays*, 213, 200, 215–16.

17 *Our Theatres in the Nineties*, II, 92–6, especially 94.

18 *Major Critical Essays*, 219, 221–2.

19 *World*, Dec. 14, 1892.

20 William Irvine, *The Universe of G. B. S.* (New York, 1949), 155.

21 "The Sanity of Art," in *Major Critical Essays*, 296.

22 *The Doctor's Dilemma*, 158, 165.

23 *Translations and Tomfooleries*, 160.

24 *Heartbreak House*, 5, 7, 108, 40. Tristan for grown men: see *Music in London*, I, 104; stimulants in music: *Music in London*, II, 49, 266.

25 *Major Critical Essays*, 222.

26 *Everybody's Political What's What?*, 186.

27 Thomas Mann, "He was Mankind's Friend" (1951), in Louis Kronenberger, ed., *George Bernard Shaw: A Critical Survey* (New York, 1953), 253.

HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING AS RE-THINKING

W. H. Dray

The theory of historical understanding set forth in R. G. Collingwood's *Idea of History*[1] has produced some sharp divisions of opinion among philosophers of history. While the "nays" have usually been written off by their opponents as insensitive positivists, obsessed by a model of inquiry derived from the natural sciences, the "ayes" have been considered, in their turn, as woolly-minded idealists, unable to distinguish between the essential logical structure of an enquiry and its psychological and methodological frills. Even those who have accepted Collingwood's doctrine, however, have often found it difficult to say exactly what they think it commits them to. For *The Idea of History* is an irritating, as well as an exciting, book. It is full of paradoxes and apparent contradictions, which in some cases appear to be not entirely unconnected with a certain contempt which Collingwood from time to time displayed towards his philosophical opponents (indeed, his readers do not always escape): a contempt well exemplified by his remark, at one point, in response to the objections of an imaginary opponent: "I am not arguing; I am telling him" (p. 263). In many cases, no doubt, a kinder explanation might be sought; for the book was left unfinished at its author's death, and some parts of it apparently record the results of fairly raw, if vigorous and stimulating, reflection.

Since some of the papers incorporated into *The Idea of History* were published by Collingwood during his lifetime, however, it seems reasonable to regard them as especially authoritative on points in his general thesis which have been disputed. The best short summary of his theory of understanding is, in fact, to be found in one of these: a lecture entitled "Human Nature and Human History," which Collingwood delivered before the British Academy in 1936. The theory which he

there elaborates, in the space of a few pages (pp. 213–15), could be reduced to the following three propositions: first, that human action, which is the proper concern of history, cannot be described *as* action at all, without mentioning the thought which it expresses—it has, in Collingwood's terms, a "thought-side"; second, that once the thought in question has been grasped by the historian, the action is understood in the sense appropriate to actions, so that it is unnecessary to go on to ask for the cause which produced it, or the law which it instantiates; third, that the understanding of action in terms of thought requires the rethinking of the thought in question by the historian, so that, in essence, all history is "the re-enactment of past thought in the historian's own mind." No doubt there is much more to Collingwood's account than can be stated in such a condensed, schematic way. But the propositions stated do seem to contain the core of the theory.

In what follows, I propose to discuss each of Collingwood's three propositions in turn, clarifying it where that is possible, amending it where that seems necessary. The discussion cannot, of course, hope to deal with more than a few of the many objections which have been advanced against his theory in recent years. But it may perhaps serve to clear the ground a little for a sympathetic consideration of what he had to say.

I

That history is concerned with human actions, perhaps few would want to dispute; but that actions necessarily have what Collingwood calls a "thought-side" may not pass quite so easily without challenge. For exactly what is meant here by "thought"? And how is the relation between such thought and the action itself to be conceived?

It must be admitted that Collingwood's treatment of these questions is often puzzling. In the paper entitled "The Subject Matter of History," for example, it seems to be his view that the thought-side of an action is an activity of reflection[2]—as if, in order to act, an agent must first consider what to do, and then act in accordance with his reflection. If history is said to be concerned exclusively with human actions, its field of study, on such a view of the nature of action, must appear ridiculously narrow. Even a sympathetic commentator like W. H. Walsh has compared Collingwood unfavourably with the German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey, in his apparent attempt to confine the historian's attention to "intellectual operations."[3] And Arnold Toynbee, in one of his latest volumes, visibly smarting under Collingwood's opinion of his own vast

enterprise as a kind of "pigeon-holing," has expressed great amusement at Collingwood's supposed ignorance of the fact that politicians, whose activities he had represented as especially suitable to historical investigation, behave in precisely the "intellectually horrifying way" which seems, for him, to place a subject-matter out of the reach of the historian's techniques.[4] Such naïvety, Toynbee maliciously suggests, could be found only in a philosopher's "theorizing."

If the paper on subject-matter contained Collingwood's only discussion of the thought-side of actions, it would be difficult to escape the conclusion that, as a philosopher, he sets up a definition of history so restrictive and arbitrary that it would rule out much of what he himself wrote as an historian. But the paper in question, which is one of the least finished ones, must be weighed carefully against what is said in other parts of *The Idea of History*. If this is done, I believe that a view of the relation between thought and action will emerge which is not open to the charge of intellectualism in any damaging sense, although it safeguards, nevertheless, the distinction which Collingwood was so anxious to maintain, between historical and scientific modes of understanding.

A hint of the rather innocuous character of Collingwood's supposed intellectualism might be gleaned from a remark he makes in discussing the weaknesses of Graeco-Roman historiography. If we look back "over our actions, or over any stretch of past history," he tells us, it becomes obvious that "to a very great extent people do not know what they are doing until they have done it, if then" (p. 42). That we may nevertheless *discover*, by careful inquiry, what they were doing—including its thought-side—is clearly implied in the British Academy Lecture already referred to, in which Collingwood argues that the historical understanding which we achieve of the actions of people remote in time from ourselves is identical in kind with that which we obtain every day of the actions of our friends and neighbours. We discover their thoughts by considering their actions. The difference between an action and a mere physical movement, according to Collingwood, is that the former is the "outward expression" of a thought.[5] We discover the thought by interpreting the action *as* an expression.

It might perhaps be argued that such an account of the relation of thought to action is quite compatible with the claim that when we recognize an action as expressing a certain thought, this is equivalent to treating it as evidence that some prior activity called "reflection" must have gone on, although, since the agent's "stream of consciousness" is not open to us, we are unable to verify this directly. But when

Collingwood is found to extend his analysis to knowledge of our *own* thoughts, such an interpretation of his meaning becomes very unplausible. In "Human Nature and Human History" Collingwood begins his discussion with the claim that historical inquiry can provide us with a kind of self-knowledge which a natural science of human nature fails to afford. The conclusion which his argument eventually reaches is that *all* knowledge of the human mind is historical. "It is only by historical thinking," he declares, "that I can discover what I thought . . . five minutes ago, by reflecting on an action that I then did, which surprised me when I realized what I had done" (p. 219). Elsewhere he makes the same point by distinguishing between memory knowledge of myself and autobiography—the latter being the discovery, by the techniques of the historian, of the thoughts actually expressed in my past actions, by contrast with what, at the time of acting, I (perhaps mistakenly) assumed my thoughts to be (pp. 295–6). As his equally celebrated successor in the chair of metaphysical philosophy at Oxford University, Professor Gilbert Ryle, was to put it: self-knowledge is obtained, not by *introspection*, but by *retrospection*.[6]

Why does Collingwood insist that knowledge of even my own thoughts must come by a process of interpreting "expressions," after the fact? It is surely because he would agree with Ryle and Wittgenstein that having a certain thought is not, in essence, a matter of reciting certain propositions to oneself, or focusing certain images on one's internal cinema screen, or "going over" in any such way what one is about to do.[7] The being of a thought is in its expression; and thoughts are expressed in actions as well as in those internal monologues and private screenings which are associated with reflecting and planning. Covert activities of this sort cannot, on Collingwood's account, be regarded as thinking *by contrast with* overt ones. The fact that thought has *inward* expressions as well as outward ones does not give the former any privileged status as "the thought." If this is so, there is no reason to assume that reflection —however brief—must precede, or even accompany, an action for the latter to be properly regarded as an expression of thought, and hence as having a thought-side. For if this were Collingwood's view, he could scarcely claim that our knowledge of the thought-side of our own actions is by historical analysis, after the fact, since we have privileged access to the stream of consciousness in which the activity of reflection presumably goes on.

In claiming that *all* knowledge of mind is historical, however, Collingwood appears to have overstated his case. For if we allowed this

claim, the following difficulty would arise. The doctrine, as he states it, is that if, in fact, I think a certain thought, *x*, at a certain time, *t*, I cannot know that I think *x* at *t*, but only at, say, *t* plus five minutes, when I can retrospect what I did and experienced at *t*. But if I say at *t plus 5* I can know, by historical inquiry, that at *t* I thought *x*, then I am claiming to know what I think, not only at *t*, but also at *t plus 5*; and on Collingwood's theory this is something I cannot justifiably do. To know what I think at *t plus 5*, I must make still another historical investigation at a later time, and so on *ad infinitum*. The regress which opens up would, of course, make it impossible to claim that I could *ever* know what I think at any time whatever. To stop the regress, it is necessary to claim that at some time or other I can know *at the time* what I think. Collingwood appears to have recognized this in the paper entitled "History as the Re-enactment of Past Experience," when, having asked himself whether "a person who performs an act of knowing" knows "that he 'is performing or has performed' that act," concludes that he can know both (p. 292).

But although Collingwood apparently abandons, in the end, his claim that all knowledge of mind is historical, what he says about self-knowledge in the passage quoted from the British Academy Lecture makes it clear that he believes some to be. And if it is, it will be unplausible to contend that what we discover by interpreting "expressions" is an activity of reflection which we engaged in at some earlier time without being aware of it. The claim that Collingwood did not confine the thought-side of actions to "intellectual operations" gains additional support from what he says at many other points. In discussing, for example, the historian's investigation of the mind "of a community or an age"—a case where deliberate planning or reflecting would be out of the question—we are told once again that the problem is essentially one of the historical interpretation of "expressions" (p. 219). And elsewhere, in attacking what he calls "scissors and paste" conceptions of the use of documents, Collingwood claims that it is possible for the historian to discover not only what has been completely forgotten—that is, is nowhere recorded in any extant document—but also "what, until he discovered it, no one ever knew to have happened at all" (p. 238). Since, for Collingwood, historical facts always concern actions, and actions always have a thought-side, the conclusion would appear to follow that historians can discover *thoughts* which were unknown, not only to any contemporary eyewitness of the actions concerned, but even to the agents themselves. And it seems to me that this claim is perfectly justified.

It may be worth adding that, on the interpretation of Collingwood's meaning which I have argued for here, even thought*less* actions may express a thought, and hence be properly regarded as having a thought-side. For to act thoughtlessly is not necessarily to act to no purpose; it is to act, rather, without taking into account certain considerations which ought to have been taken into account. Similarly, impulsive actions are in no way extruded from the historian's concerns on the ground that they lack a thought-side; for although to do a thing on impulse is incompatible with doing it as a matter of policy, or in order to implement a plan, it is not necessarily to do it for no reason. W. H. Walsh has distinguished usefully, in this connection, between saying that a person acted with something *before his mind*, and saying that he had something *in mind*; and he points out that the historian is as interested in cases falling into the second category as into the first.[8] In arguing, however, that actions in the second category may also be said to express a thought, Walsh offers what he regards as an amendment required to bring Collingwood's theory to terms with historical inquiry as it now exists. What I have tried to show is that such cases are already provided for by a theory of mind and thought which there are grounds for believing that Collingwood actually held. In arguing thus, I am, of course, appealing without much scruple from Collingwood drunk to Collingwood sober; from "The Subject Matter of History" to "Human Nature and Human History," on the assumption that the latter can be considered as the more authoritative. That the criticisms of Walsh and Toynbee find justification in the contents of the former paper, I should not attempt to deny.

II

If we grant the foregoing analysis of what it is that the historian, in order to know another's thought, must set himself to discover, what are we to say of Collingwood's second proposition: that once the thought has been discovered, the action can be understood without our having also to know the law under which it falls, or the cause which brought it about? Collingwood expresses his claim in characteristically provocative fashion when he asserts that, in history, once we know *what* happened, we already know *why* it happened (p. 214). He says this, presumably, because what happened is an action, and this, on his view, includes an explanatory thought-side. But does the thought of the agent really have this explanatory force? Can it provide us by itself with a *complete* explanation of what was done?

In asking ourselves whether an action can be completely or satisfactorily explained in terms of the agent's thought, it will be helpful, at the outset, to remind ourselves of a peculiar feature of the question "Why?"—namely, that a person can go on asking it as long as he pleases. Any theory of the nature of explanation, therefore, which does not rule out in advance objections arising from this possibility, can never hope to gain acceptance by a really determined opponent. Thus, if a historian explains Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon by referring to his determination to oust Pompey from the capital, it cannot be taken as a defect of Collingwood's theory that this explanation is incomplete—if by this we mean only that we can still ask why Caesar wanted to get rid of Pompey. It is not a defect of Collingwood's theory because, if a defect at all, it would be a defect of *any* theory of what counts as an answer to the question "Why?" Explanations can be regarded as given at successive levels of inquiry; and the farther we carry the questioning process, the deeper the explanation may be said to be. What Collingwood has to say, however, can be fairly assessed only as a theory of what counts as an answer to the question "Why?" at a single level.

What we must ask, therefore, is whether a thought has full explanatory force—by contrast with great explanatory depth—even at one level of inquiry. And it will be seen at once that if we merely cited Caesar's goal or purpose in crossing the Rubicon the "thought" in question would not achieve such explanatory completeness by itself. To achieve this we should have to fill in many other things which, in the course of his narrative, a historian would ordinarily be content to leave implicit or understood. We should have to take account of such other thoughts as, for example, Caesar's belief that Pompey was in Rome and would remain there; and before we were through, we should have collected a sizable and complex group of what might be called the considerations which moved Caesar to action. But although Collingwood would certainly admit that the original explanation, if criticized on the ground of its incompleteness, would have to be added to in some such way, he would insist that such addition need not refer beyond the action itself to laws or causes. The explanation is completed by rounding out the thought-side, not by adding something of an altogether different kind.

But what is the criterion of completeness, in this second, and relevant, sense of the term? Collingwood himself speaks of the explanatory thought as what "moves" or "determines" the agent to act.[9] And I think it would do no violence to his meaning if we said that until the thought-side is rounded out to the point where we can see that it *necessitated* the action, no complete explanation will have been given. Perhaps this will appear,

at first sight, to be too rigorous a demand. But upon reflection, I think we should have to agree that a set of considerations which shows only that a certain course of action was one of a number which *might* have been pursued by the agent, yet falls short of showing that he *had* to choose the one he did, would not explain his doing what he did. No doubt such considerations would explain something. They might explain, perhaps, how it was possible for the agent to have done what he did. But they could scarcely be regarded as answering the question "Why?"

Unfortunately, Collingwood was not as careful as he should have been to draw such distinctions between kinds of explanatory problems. In the passage of the British Academy Lecture already referred to, he gives as an example of an explanatory thought, Caesar's "defiance of Republican law"; and although this does indeed appear to be a thought which the crossing of the Rubicon could be said to express, it is difficult to see how it could be an answer, or even part of an answer, to the question: "Why did Caesar cross the Rubicon?" Caesar *could*, of course, have crossed it in order to defy Republican law; but if his purpose had been only to carry out a demonstration of this sort, there would have been no need for him to march on Rome. The thought elicited in this case seems to me to be much more plausibly represented as an answer to an entirely different sort of question: a question about the *significance* of Caesar's action.[10] Our concern here, however, is with "explanation why." The fact that, in Collingwood's example, "defiance of Republican law" does not appear to have been one of the considerations which "moved" Caesar to action, is therefore irrelevant to our assessment of the claim that a complete set of explanatory "thoughts" would be one which represented what was done as necessarily done.

If it is still not clear that this is what Collingwood is saying, the fault may lie in a certain lack of precision which should be noticed in the claim that once the thought-side of an action has been discovered, the conditions of understanding have been satisfied. For, strictly speaking, an action cannot be explained in terms of its own thought-side. As Collingwood originally states his theory, the thought-side of an action is something that must be included in the very *specification* of the action (p. 213). The action is not a "doing" at all, but simply a "movement," unless it is an expression of thought. The thought which is required to make it the action it is, therefore, cannot be considered as something logically distinct from it, by reference to which the action itself can be explained. The thought-side of an action might, of course, be called upon to explain the mere movement which is its own other "side": we might say, for instance, that Caesar's wanting to get to the other shore

explains his physical progress across the river. But it is clear enough that in history, the problem will almost always be the explanation of actions, not mere movements; and in order to explain an action in terms of thought it will be necessary to refer beyond the action to a thought which is not itself part of the action as specified.

It would always be possible, of course, to incorporate this *further* thought into the specification of the action, thus expanding its thought-side. If we explained Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, for example, in terms of his wanting to oust Pompey from the capital, we might say that his crossing expressed the latter thought as well as his merely wanting to get to the other shore. But in assessing the applicability of a theory of explanation or understanding, it is important to keep the questions, as well as the answers, straight; and it should be clear that if we allow such incorporation, we can no longer claim that Caesar's wanting to oust Pompey explains *the action*; for the action to be explained is now, not the crossing of the Rubicon, but the crossing of the Rubicon to oust Pompey. To insist on such logical niceties may appear unduly pedantic. Yet unless they are recognized, Collingwood's theory of explanation in terms of thought lies open to the charge—commonly made—that he believes human actions, by contrast with natural events, to be *self*-explanatory. And in spite of the misleading way in which he sometimes states the "inside-outside" theory, it is difficult to believe, in the light of his general view of historical thinking, that he intended to make any such claim.

If a complete explanation of an action is said to be achieved when a set of considerations, or "thoughts," not themselves included in the specification of the action, can be seen to have necessitated it, the question arises whether Collingwood can maintain the distinction between his own account and that of his positivist opponents. For it is a central doctrine of the positivists whom he attacks—a doctrine derived ultimately from Hume's classical discussion of causation—that necessities asserted of the real world are read into it on the basis of a belief in general laws. On such a view, the only way to vindicate my claim that, given x, y necessarily happened, is to argue: "Whenever x then y"; so that to say that the historian's explanation represents the action as necessitated by the thought which explains it, would commit the historian to the view that it does so by virtue of some law. Now Collingwood, at this point, is indeed questioning this positivist assumption quite directly; but it is important to see exactly how he is doing it. For his frequent remarks about the limited applicability of the generalizations which

might be derived from a study of human activities in any historical period, and his denial that man's reason is itself subject to laws at all, may make it appear that his point is simply that human actions cannot be explained on the model of the natural sciences because they are not necessitated.[11] His point would, in fact, appear to be quite otherwise. For, as a study of "Human Nature and Human History" will confirm, his claim is rather that, whether "positive" laws of human nature are discoverable or not, they are not *required* for historical understanding (pp. 214, 223). They are not required because human actions can be understood when they are seen to have been necessitated in an entirely different way.

The issue between Collingwood and his opponents thus turns on the question: "How can an action be necessitated except in terms of natural law?" Collingwood's answer would be that it can be necessitated in the sense of its being rationally required. A set of antecedent conditions which explains a consequent event by virtue of a law of nature, shows the event to have been necessary in the sense of being "the thing to have expected, the laws of nature being what they are." The thoughts or considerations which explain an action in Collingwood's context of discussion, show the action to have been necessary in the sense of being "the thing to have done, the principles of reason being what they are."[12] We could put the point by saying that the necessity which is required for the explanation of action in history, according to Collingwood, is a *rational* rather than a *natural* necessity. If something happens in spite of natural necessity, we call it a miracle. If an action is done in spite of rational necessity, we call it a stupidity, a mistake, an irrationality. It is Collingwood's claim that if, and only if, rational necessity can be shown, then we understand what the agent did. And he adds that such understanding does not require the further demonstration, by the methods of natural science, that what happened was a natural necessity as well.

The exact rôle which the concept of rational necessity plays in Collingwood's theory will appear more clearly when we go on to investigate the notion of "re-thinking." But a word should perhaps be added first about the concept of causation; for it may seem, once again, that Collingwood is simply flying in the face of the facts when he says that historians are not, or should not be, interested in the causes of actions. But his claim turns out, on closer examination, to be only that historians —their concept of understanding being what it is—do not need to discover *natural* causes for the actions they claim to understand. That historians commonly and legitimately use causal language, he does not

attempt to deny. But he regards the historian's use of the term as a special one; for when it is said that it was his wanting to get rid of Pompey that caused Caesar to march on Rome, the word *cause* here implies a rational connection of the sort already examined, between what Caesar did and the considerations said to explain it (pp. 214–15). Collingwood himself speaks at various points of a thought not only causing an action but also determining or inducing it. But I think it is clear that he does not regard these locutions as reintroducing the concept of natural necessitation in terms of general laws of human mind or behaviour, which his general theory of historical understanding has ruled out as irrelevant.

III

We have still to examine Collingwood's third proposition: that discovering the explanatory thought requires its re-thinking in the historian's mind. From some critics, this feature of the theory has encountered the objection that such re-thinking is impossible; from others the complaint that it is unnecessary. It seems to me that neither objection is valid if Collingwood's point is taken in its proper sense. Let me therefore attempt, once again, to separate what I think is the basic doctrine from the misconceptions which may perhaps arise out of unfortunate forms of expression.

At least one of the reasons for questioning the possibility of re-thinking disappears in the light of our discussion of Collingwood's general conception of thought. For if thinking is logically distinguished from private imaginings and recitations, and if it is allowed that a person may sometimes not know what he thinks, there is no need to boggle at the notion of the historian *re*-thinking thoughts which may not have been fully articulated or explicitly recognized by the agent himself—even when those thoughts can be expressed by the historian as an argument. Since there are at least as many ways of thinking the same thought as there are ways of expressing it, there is nothing in Collingwood's theory which requires the historian to go through the same overt actions, or undergo the same private experiences, as the subject of his inquiry.[13] The fact that the original thought may not have been thought propositionally would therefore be no barrier to its being re-thought propositionally—the way we should naturally expect the historian to re-think it. It does not seem to be absolutely necessary, however, that the historian's re-thinking should take this form. He might, for example, re-think Nelson's thoughts with models of his ships on a table of naval operations, for a start—

although he would, of course, have to express the thoughts propositionally when writing his monograph on "Nelson at Trafalgar."

The demand that the agent's thoughts be re-thought has also been seen to raise a different sort of problem. For, as Collingwood himself declares, "the mere re-enactment of another's thought does not make historical knowledge; we must also know that we are re-enacting it" (p. 289). How can the historian know that the thought he thinks is identical with the agent's? Collingwood unfortunately does not give this question the kind of consideration we should have liked it to get from a philosopher with his experience in historical research. Apart from a denial that historical arguments are either deductive or inductive in the ordinary sense,[14] and a lively dissection of the reasoning implicit in crime detection—illustrated by a detective yarn of his own invention (pp. 266 ff.)—we are left with little more than the rather dogmatic assurance that, in so far as there is knowledge at all, there are occasions on which the historian can be sure of his conclusions. Perhaps this contention would have seemed more acceptable if Collingwood had not, in an apparently unguarded moment, claimed that historical conclusions can, in some cases, be known as certainly as a proof in mathematics (p. 262). Since history proceeds, on his own showing, by the interpretation of evidence, not by formal deduction, the precise meaning of this curious claim is not obvious. But that a "weight of evidence" may, from time to time, justify a non-mathematical kind of certainty in history, would appear to be deniable only by someone whose scepticism embraced a good deal more than historical arguments.

If we grant that the historian *can* re-think his subject's thoughts, must we go on to agree that historical understanding *requires* this? Collingwood is most insistent that it does. "To know 'what someone is thinking' (or 'has thought')," he writes, "involves thinking it for oneself" (p. 288). And it is clear that he means this quite literally. In order to grasp the agent's thought, and see that it really does explain his action, the historian must do more than merely reproduce the agent's argument, whether implicit or explicit; he must also *draw his conclusion.* It is not enough merely to examine a report of the agent's "thought-process"; the historian must, on inspecting the thoughts, and treating them as premisses of practical deliberation, actually *think that* the conclusion follows. The historian's "seeing" the connection between the agent's "considerations" and his action entails his *certification* of the connection between them—this entailment being a logical one. If the attempt to re-think, and thus to certify, the agent's thought-action complex breaks down—as Colling-

wood admits it has done in the case of certain early Roman emperors—then we have a dark spot, an unintelligibility, a failure to understand.[15]

Collingwood sometimes puts the point in terms of a distinction between knowing the agent's thoughts as "object" and as "act." In order to understand an action, he declares, "it is necessary to know 'what someone else is thinking', not only in the sense of knowing the same object that he knows, but in the further sense of knowing the act by which he knows it" (p. 288). And again: "The act of thinking can be studied only as an act" (p. 293). To put the point in these terms is perhaps to be unnecessarily obscure. But to represent re-thinking as a sharing in an activity does serve to bring out the requirement that the connection between thought and action be *tested* by the historian, if he wishes to understand what was done. The doctrine may appear less formidable when Collingwood goes on to consider examples. In order to understand the Theodosian Code, we are told, the historian "must envisage the situation with which the emperor was trying to deal, and he must envisage it just as the emperor envisaged it. Then he must see for himself, just as if the emperor's situation were his own, how such a situation might be dealt with; he must see the possible alternatives, and the reasons for choosing one rather than another; and thus he must go through the process which the emperor went through in deciding on this particular course" (p. 283). To see that the emperor had reasons for doing what he did is thus to understand his doing it. And to see that he had reasons is, at the same time, to certify the reasons *as* reasons.

The explanation might thus be said to succeed to the extent to which it reveals the rationality of the agent. An action is said to be understood, on Collingwood's view, when it is seen to have been rationally necessary. Does this way of putting it impute to Collingwood a rationalism as divorced from the realities of historical inquiry as the intellectualism we have already denied? Some of Collingwood's dicta might seem to support such a conclusion; others point the other way. The strategy of Admiral Villeneuve at Trafalgar, he tells us, cannot possibly be understood; for the fact that he lost the battle shows that Villeneuve's strategy was wrong—as if an action must be rationally appropriate to the *actual* situation or be unintelligible.[16] On the other hand, in discussing Hegel's philosophy of history, Collingwood welcomes the "fertile and valuable principle" asserted there that "every historical character in every historical situation thinks and acts rationally as that person in that situation *can* think and act."[17] What was said above about the understanding of the Theodosian Code should be sufficient to show that,

in Collingwood's hands, such a principle attributes no absolute rationality to the agents whose actions historians claim to understand. For what renders an action "rational," in the sense of "understandable," is its being required by the situation as it was envisaged, not by the situation as it actually was. The historian's certification might thus be said to be a "hypothetical" one. Its implication is simply that *if* the situation had been as the agent envisaged it, then what he did would have been the rational thing to do.

But even if we interpret Hegel's "fertile principle" in terms of such a "hypothetical" rationality, the principle may possibly lead us astray. For it apparently suggests to Collingwood that when understanding fails, we can only attribute this failure to a breakdown of historical analysis—"It is the historian himself who stands at the bar of judgment . . ." (p. 219). Historical understanding being the sort of thing it is, it seems to me that a number of other possibilities would have to be taken into account.

We must allow, for example, for cases where the agent's reasoning about his situation is itself mistaken. For an agent may be in error, not only in the way he envisages his situation, but also in concluding that what he did was required by the situation as he envisaged it. Such an agent would have to be regarded by the historian as "irrational" in a stronger sense than the agent who, although he misconceived his situation, nevertheless acted in the way required by the situation as he conceived it. The thought of the latter agent can be re-thought by the historian, albeit only hypothetically; but the thought of the former cannot be re-thought at all. In so far as a person makes a mistake in the reasoning which represents what he did as rationally required, his action can only be explained *as* mistaken—a word whose function here is to rule out the possibility of explaining what was done in terms of reasons. Such an action could therefore not be "understood," in Collingwood's sense of the word.

We must allow also for cases where what is done was not intended by the agent: cases of accidental or inadvertent action, illustrated, for example, by a cabinet minister's subversion of his own government's position by an unwise speech made in its defence. It would appear to be cases of this kind which Collingwood has in mind when he denies that "every agent is wholly and directly responsible for everything that he does" (p. 41). It might be argued, I suppose, that in such cases, although there is doubtless an action (giving the speech) which is explicable in the ordinary way, what is specified as requiring explanation (bringing

down the government) is not really the agent's *action* at all. Yet what was done *was*, in this case, something which the agent could be held responsible for; and his colleagues would not be slow to say that he *did* it. If for these reasons we called it an action, then it must be admitted that this, too, is a kind of action which could not be understood in Collingwood's sense.

Still another sort of case which Hegel's principle must allow for is that of arbitrary or capricious action: cases where an agent may have known certain things about his situation, and may have realized that a certain response was, in reason, demanded, yet deliberately acted otherwise. The possibility of such action has sometimes been denied. It has been alleged that what we do, we always do for some reason—even if it takes a psychoanalyst to discover it. I cannot undertake to argue the contrary here in any detail. But I think we might perhaps be a trifle wary of a theory of action which, on some occasion, might condemn a historical agent to the fate of Buridan's ass, who, on finding himself stationed equidistant between two equally succulent bundles of hay, followed reason and starved to death. The ass, admittedly, had every reason to eat one bundle before the other; and if he had eaten them successively, *something* could doubtless have been explained—for example, that he ate any hay at all, or even that he ate one bundle before the other. But it would clearly have been impossible, *ex hypothesi*, to explain in Collingwood's sense why he chose to eat the one he did before eating the other. I do not, of course, suggest that the historian will very often be confronted with an agent placed in the unhappy position of such a philosophical ass. But it is hard to see, if the ass's philosophy be not refuted, how Hegel's principle, even in its attenuated Collingwoodian form, can be accepted as universally valid.

NOTES

1 Oxford, 1946.

2 *Idea of History*, 305–15.

3 *Introduction to Philosophy of History* (London, 1951), 50.

4 *A Study of History* (London, 1954), IX, 722.

5 *Idea of History*, 217. See also pp. 212, 214, 220.

6 *The Concept of Mind* (London, 1949), chapter VI. Rylian language is employed in the two paragraphs following.

7 *Idea of History*, 286, 301, 303.

8 *Philsophy of History*, 54.

9 E.g., *Idea of History*, 216–17.

10 For a different solution, see Toynbee, *Study of History*, 720–1. According to him, Caesar's action expresses "will," not "thought."

11 See *Idea of History*, 224, 220.

12 I am discussing here the general *concept* of rational necessity. The qualifications requiring to be made when it is employed in historical understanding are introduced in section III.

13 Collingwood's term "re-enactment" may appear more troublesome in this connection than "re-thinking"; but for Collingwood thinking is an activity.

14 *Idea of History*, 261–2. Mr. Alan Donagan has discussed this aspect of Collingwood's theory in an illuminating way in "The Verification of Historical Theses," *Philosophical Quarterly* (July 1956).

15 *Idea of History*, 310.

16 R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Oxford, 1941), 70. T. M. Knox, in the "Editor's Preface" to *The Idea of History*, assumes that this is Collingwood's meaning. I think it possible that what he had in mind was rather the extent to which the evidence, upon which conclusions about Villeneuve's actual strategy during the battle would have been based, was destroyed by Nelson's victory.

17 *Idea of History*, 116.

REVIEW ARTICLE

*England's Phoenix**

D. H. Lawrence ended his article "Hymns in a Man's Life" with the remark: "Here is the clue to the ordinary Englishman—in the Nonconformist hymns." The remark calls attention to a fact in English culture which is too often in danger of being forgotten, or even of being deliberately overlooked (Lawrence, it should be stressed, wrote "ordinary Englishman," not "Englishman"); but it is also in itself a clue, *the* clue to a proper understanding of Lawrence. If we seize on it we shall not be surprised to discover him affirming elsewhere: "I was brought up on the Bible, and seem to have it in my bones. . . . I was sent to Sunday School and to Chapel, to Band of Hope and to Christian Endeavour, and was always having the Bible read at me or to me." Hymns, Chapel, Bible, Band of Hope—all that is needed now is to translate these into terms of society and the essential Lawrence is laid bare. And turning to Lawrence's "Autobiographical Sketch"—the first piece to be included by Anthony Beal in his useful selection of Lawrence's literary criticism, from which the two previous quotations have been taken—we find the translation effected: "I was born among the working classes and brought up among them."

The tradition from which Lawrence sprang, radical and nonconformist, is outlined in these quotations; a tradition to which T. S. Eliot slightingly referred when he observed that we ought to see in Lawrence an illustration of "the crippling effect upon men of letters of not having been brought up in the environment of a living and central tradition." This remark, and others like it, has so exasperated F. R. Leavis that in his recent study of Lawrence he falls to skirmishing with Eliot on every possible occasion. Eliot's attitude to Lawrence, however, was predetermined by the tradition he himself adopted and has so successfully propagated; a tradition, conservative and Anglo-Catholic, which maintains its exclusiveness by a deft use of the black-ball. Milton, the most formidable candidate for honours, was black-balled until Eliot thought it safer to admit that "two-handed engine" into the club rather than to leave him any longer threatening at the door.

This tradition is reaffirmed by Eliot in his latest collection of criticism, *On Poets and Poetry*; a collection that will not add to his reputation—but

*See page 225 for bibliography of books discussed in this article.

only because it is already too great to be augmented at this late hour. The collection supplements his earlier critical writing and extends its argument—more than extends it. Eliot wonderfully refines his idea of tradition to the sharpness of a needle and places on the tip one angel—Virgil: the sole, the universal classic—a feat reminiscent of the Schoolman's more generous effort. Virgil's immobility is, of course, a help: the restlessness of Lawrence and his kind would have upset such extraordinary attempts at balance.

In view of Eliot's attitude to Lawrence, the irony in the present literary situation is that Lawrence himself is being used to reinforce the efforts on foot to undermine Eliot's prestige. His criticism is being pitted against the other's; his story of *St. Mawr* against *The Waste Land* or *The Cocktail Party*. Why this reaction against Eliot, so sudden, so mounting? In part, no doubt, it is a fashionable, an inevitable, resistance to a reputation swollen till it has become oppressive; but it is also a belated recognition of the claims of the excluded, of those whose misfortune it has been to belong to the proscribed, the radical and nonconformist tradition.

It is Eliot's misfortune to have fallen—to have played—into the hands of the academics. His poetry is a standing invitation to them to embark on exegesis, and his criticism, of the same cast, has given fashionable currency to their professional habits of mind. Never before have they had a live poet—a *modern* poet, *the* modern poet—on their side, and they have found that, stamped with his name, their most conservative opinions can pass. Not unnaturally, they have repaid their indebtedness with adulation, and Eliot himself, like a saint of superstitious appeal, is in danger of disappearing from sight beneath an incrustation of glittering tributes. Their relation to him, however, runs deeper than sympathy. They have discovered in his criticism a restatement of tradition that is contemporary in idiom and sensibility, and yet safe and useful: an interpretation they can unreservedly recommend.

The position of Lawrence is the reverse. He is not safe, he is not useful, and his nonconformist voice is raised in protest against all conservative claims. The difference between him and Eliot can be seen at a glance by looking at the tables of contents to the two collections under notice. To begin with general topics: Eliot discusses such themes as "What is minor poetry?", "What is a classic?"; Lawrence, "Pornography and obscenity," "Surgery for the novel—or a bomb." The difference becomes even more pronounced when we turn to the particular authors who fall under their review. Eliot selects Virgil, Johnson, Byron (this is his most unsatisfactory and self-revelatory paper), Goethe, Kipling, and others; Lawrence matches these with such authors as Corvo, Dostoievsky, Verga, Deledda and Fenimore Cooper. Safe and useful? Eliot is clearly far in the lead, but how far could be shown only by a detailed comparison. Eliot's paper on Johnson might be contrasted with Lawrence's on Galsworthy, for example. Eliot on Johnson is greatly refreshing. He understands Johnson's significance, appreciates his achievement, and ensures his acceptance by showing how central he is to the tradition. Altogether, it is thoroughly safe and useful: one of the very best and most welcome of Eliot's essays. Lawrence on Galsworthy, on the

other hand, is extremely disconcerting. He despises Galsworthy's reputation, he denigrates him savagely, and by striking repeatedly with one idea—that Galsworthy's notion of love is just "doggish amorousness"—he proves by the hollowness of the echo he rouses that no one is at home. Safe? useful? Eliot on Johnson can be recommended without qualification, while a recommendation of Lawrence on Galsworthy must be hedged in with so many qualifications that on the whole it is safer to make none. But if Lawrence's essay were to be recommended, what would be the result? The reader would be introduced to one of the most brilliant (in part) and yet one of the more misleading (in part) and emphatically one of the most stimulating critical essays of our time.

What is the source of difference between the two? Why do they hang in opposition like two stars? "Tradition" might be answer enough, but an answer inconveniently shrunk. "A critic must be emotionally alive in every fibre, intellectually capable and skilful in essential logic, and then morally very honest." Lawrence's description of the qualities needed by the critic is one, I take it, to which Eliot might cautiously subscribe, but his subscription to this and other of Lawrence's basic tenets would still leave the two completely unreconciled. Their disagreement is in its origin extra-literary: Anglo-Catholicism and Congregationalism. Eliot's vision of literature is hieratic: literary values have been transmitted down from Virgil almost by the imposition of hands; and he is in consequence greatly concerned to discover the true order of succession and the relative standing of everyone in the ranks. And by bringing himself into line he hopes, too, like Pope in the *Essay on Criticism,* to be numbered among those "whose honours with increase of ages grow." Lawrence's vision is simultaneous: "Give me . . . the immediate present, the Now." He sees and discusses only what happens to bear immediately on him, and if a dead author strikes his attention that author is as contemporary as one whose work came off the press the day before. The difference between them is beautifully exemplified in their respective approaches to Hamlet: Hamlet is Lawrence's vital contemporary; Hamlet is Eliot's contemporary only to the degree that he persists as a dateless problem in art.

In the nature of the case, not many writers of the past could work so directly on Lawrence's imagination as to call for criticism, and it is to this apparent limitation that Eliot seems to point when he calls him "an ignorant man in the sense that he was unaware of how much he did not know." A superficial judgment. Lawrence's vision, being simultaneous, never needed the reassurances of succession and precedent which the hieratic vision requires; it looked only on what came to hand and was not concerned to establish connections, to propose parallels. What it saw was enough; but what it saw it observed so sharply and so well that its description is criticism of exceptional power. The introduction to *The Grand Inquisitor,* to *Mastro-don Gesualdo,* the essays on Hardy, on Melville—where else are we to look in contemporary criticism for such exact location of a problem central to each of these writers and such an agile and successful pursuit of implications?

I may seem to be trying to avoid the full force of Eliot's charge. Is

Lawrence ignorant? And how can he be shown not to be by a statement that his vision is simultaneous? I could have laid the objection at the start by using "nonconformist" instead of "simultaneous," but it was then too early to return directly to the clue given by Lawrence's article on hymns. The hymns Lawrence liked as a child were the martial ones and the evocative; those that urged on the good fight and those that recalled the shores of Galilee. The martial ones may be set aside at the moment in favour of those of the other kind. The evocation of place in these hymns is immediate; the scene of the wandering of the patriarchs, of Christ's mission, is not viewed historically, but nostalgically: as a place where the soul could have been walking now, had the doom of exile not been pronounced:

> Each gentle dove
> And sighing bough
> That makes the eve
> So fair to me
> Has something far
> Diviner now
> To draw me back
> To Galilee.

In every sense the past is contemporary to the fervent mind as it sings these hymns, and equally so when it studies the Bible: "I should have missed bitterly a direct knowledge of the Bible," Lawrence wrote, "and a direct relation to Galilee and Canaan, Moab and Kedron, those places that never existed on earth." This is to say no more than that the nonconformist vision reduces time, contracts space, and views all simultaneously. And the nonconformist vision must be simultaneous, as everything that falls under its notice, whatever its relation in space or time, bears directly on salvation; all that is not judged to conduce to that great end is discarded. Lawrence's criticism is the record of this vision in literature. Eliot speaking from an Anglo-Catholic pulpit calls Lawrence ignorant because he steps out of the doors of Chapel.

But the hymns have a much deeper significance for the understanding of Lawrence than I have yet suggested. Lawrence said that Galilee and Canaan, Moab and Kedron, never existed on earth, but in a very real sense he spent his life looking for them, and his writings are an account of his search. His attempts to give reality to Rananim, that colony of loving friends, as chimerical and pathetic a scheme as its prototype, the settlement proposed by the pantisocrats, and, more important, his restless travels round the world after the First World War, were nothing less than a search for Canaan's golden land. Rebecca West was right: "These were the journeys that the mystics of a certain type have always found necessary." She would have come even closer to the truth if she had remembered the words of Bunyan's hymn—"to be a pilgrim." Lawrence was a pilgrim, and as every pilgrim is, he was doomed to disappointment; but the pilgrimage he undertook had as its unconscious inspiration the hymns he had heard describing the Promised Land as though it lay no farther away than round the next corner.

His writings, and especially his later writings, those that appeared after

the First World War, describe the stages of his pilgrimage. The horrors of the War worked in him like madness; how perilously close he came to insanity is recorded in *Kangeroo*, in the chapter entitled "Nightmare"; and the slaughter of his generation in Flanders, the sneaking barbarity of the civilians at home, the utter collapse of the civilization which he had grown up in, impelled him abroad in the illusory hope of discovering the mystical country of the hymns, the title to which Europe had forfeited. How damaging was the blow that the War dealt to the radical and nonconformist *milieu* from which Lawrence sprang is suggested in a remark made by one of Lawrence's early friends. Speaking of the intellectual group in Eastwood, which Lawrence frequented, she said: "England was almost remade by groups such as ours in that Midland town. They were spearheads into a future whose promise has not been fulfilled."

The division in Lawrence's life made by the War is repeated in his writings. The work which straddles the division, looking before and after, is *Women in Love*. F. R. Leavis, in his study of Lawrence, devotes himself largely to this novel, and to its forerunner, *The Rainbow*. In these two works we are to see, he argues, Lawrence's greatest achievement in fiction; though his admiration extends farther, of course, to take in the stories and short novels, especially *St. Mawr*. The particular service he renders is to place these two novels in the tradition which he outlined in his study of the novel, *The Great Tradition*, and the connection which he makes between Lawrence and George Eliot is of high value. He has less sympathy with the later novels, even with *Kangeroo*, and his reluctance to see their merits has forced John Middleton Murry to argue with him in *Love, Freedom and Society*, an interpretation of Lawrence and Albert Schweitzer. Murry's book, which is essentially a coda to his long involvement with Lawrence, stresses the later writings, especially *Kangeroo*, and helps to redress the lack of balance which Leavis has introduced into the Lawrence canon. The difference between the two critics—discounting the incompatibility of their temperaments—springs from the wish of the one to place Lawrence in the tradition of the novel and of the other to read his writings as a scripture, continuously unfolding from the first book to the last. To Murry, Leavis's approach is academic, in the pejorative sense. And yet the approach of neither is exclusive.

Lawrence's search for the Promised Land starts from love, the relation that lies at the root of society; and love is in its effect as radical and transforming as conversion. His first novel, *The White Peacock*, is a tentative statement of his theme; *Sons and Lovers* is an inquiry into and elimination of the forms of false love—of the love that cankers instead of nourishing the root; and *The Rainbow* is the first full description of what love really is, its power, its operation. In these three novels Lawrence is able to place his characters firmly in society and to illustrate their experience of love in its context. However great the conflict between his characters and society, it is not so profound that the characters can become themselves only by escaping from it. Indeed, it is essential, though the argument in its present narrow shape applies mainly to *The Rainbow*, that they should find fulfilment in society, or else their becoming through love will have been idle and

without result—the intended result being the rejuvenation of society, the realization of the Promised Land. The chapter in *The Rainbow* entitled "Childhood of Anna Lensky" ends with a paragraph reminiscent of one of Blake's pictorial visions of the New Jerusalem: "Anna's soul was put at peace between them. She looked from one to the other, and she saw them established to her safety, and she was free. She played between the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud in confidence, having the assurance on her right hand and the assurance on her left. She was no longer called upon to uphold with her childish might the broken end of the arch. Her father and her mother now met to the span of the heavens, and she, the child, was free to play in the space beneath, between."

Women in Love was intimately connected with *The Rainbow* in its composition, and is certainly its equal in achievement; but the difference between them is highly significant. *Women in Love* illustrates more exquisitely the becoming of the individual through love, and it also makes, as Leavis so rightly insists, a searching commentary on society; but it does not, and this is the point, accept love within the context of society, as *The Rainbow* does. Tom Brangwen and Lydia Lensky, Will Brangwen and Anna Lensky, in *The Rainbow* marry and have children; Birkin and Ursula in *Women in Love* complete the course of their love in marriage, but not only are they childless at the end of the story, they quit England intent—at least Birkin is so intent—on leading a migratory life. And thus the pattern of all the later writings is irrevocably established: in *Kangeroo*, Somers and his wife are childless and only pause in Australia in their passage to here, there, anywhere; in *St. Mawr*, Lou Carrington, miserably married and childless, is routed at the end to the same destination as Birkin and Somers; and in *The Man Who Died*, Lawrence's last and most extreme statement of the theme, the man who died is shown at the end sailing away from the priestess of Isis into the unknown.

There are two, complementary, explanations of the pattern inaugurated with *Women in Love*. The first takes us straight back to the hymns. Life to the nonconformist is essentially a question of becoming; it is intended that he should make a pilgrimage; and in Lawrence's translation of this question into terms of love between man and woman, it is inevitable that marriage should be treated as a stage, though the most important stage of all, in the course of love, rather than as significant in itself, as an institution. The weakness of nonconformity obviously resides in its establishment; an establishment for pilgrims can only be a stage. But as soon as nonconformity is converted into politics, it becomes radicalism, intent upon setting up the Kingdom on earth now, upon realizing immediately the goal of its spiritual pilgrimage. Had the world run smooth, Lawrence would have been driven into describing marriage in social terms, the only terms possible once the family has been brought into existence through love. That he did not, could not do so, leaving his argument, as far as society is concerned, at the point he had reached in *The Rainbow*, is due to the terrible impact of the War, which destroyed his faith in man as a political animal. He went on to describe again and again with extraordinary sensibility the individual coming into being through love,

but all he can do with his characters once they are redeemed is turn them loose on pilgrimage. *Kangeroo* is in this respect alone of so much greater significance than Leavis allows. The married but childless Somers becomes involved in Australian politics—the type of politics everywhere in the War's aftermath; but society itself has been so fractured by the War that political action is like surgery on a dying man, useless at the best. And Somers is consequently compelled to move on once more—to move on in search of a society where love can assume its full responsibilities, reaching beyond the individual to the family of man. The problem is stated most abruptly in *The Man Who Died*. The man who died, the crucified Christ, reviving after his execution, rejects his church and sets out again on pilgrimage.

The singleness with which Lawrence pursued this theme through *Women in Love* to *The Man Who Died* is the reason why Murry rightly argues against Leavis that to separate *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* from the later novels is to distort the rhythm of Lawrence's work. And as the questions Lawrence raised are of fundamental significance for our time, Murry is prepared to use Lawrence's work as a scripture: "he lived," Murry writes, "where we can only think, the paradox of contemporary existence." He is ultimately disappointed in it as scripture, in spite of its continual revelations, and inevitably so. *The Man Who Died* affords the explanation: a scripture must lead to an establishment, and it is with the family, the primary unit of an establishment based on Lawrence's postulate, love, that Lawrence fails.

But it is doing Lawrence an injustice to expect him to provide a scripture, and in spite of Murry's eloquence—and his study is deeply moving and deserves to be read—we cannot help but feel that his demand on Lawrence is inordinate. It is fairer to take him as Leavis does, as a man of letters rather than as a prophet; and then the advantages of his theme to him as a writer, become perfectly plain.

The first advantage is the wonderfully heightened sense of personality it confers. The challenge posed to all of Lawrence's characters is the one he heard so frequently expounded in Chapel—the call to cast off the old man and put on the new; and Lawrence describes with unfaltering sensibility and intelligence the struggle into consciousness of the awakened spirit, or its failure to meet the challenge and its consequent decline and death. That the challenge is couched in sexual terms is the reason why its essentially religious nature has been obscured; and this obscuration may be explained in the words Hazlitt used to defend Boccacio: "This character . . . has been kept up by the grossness of mankind, who . . . only saw in his writings what suited the coarseness of their own tastes." That it deeply distressed Lawrence, who saw his whole message in danger of distortion, is evident: "God forbid," he wrote to Lady Ottoline Morrell, "that I should be taken as urging loose sex activity. There is a brief time for sex, and a long time when sex is out of place." Love is the gate through which the spirit passes on its way to self-realization; the opportunity offered to the personality to come into being. And it is because he is so aware of becoming that Lawrence can give the impression of consciousness with such unique power.

The prose is the reflection of this vision. Discussing his own poetry, Lawrence wrote: "Give me nothing fixed, set, static. . . . Give me the still, white seething, the incandescence and the coldness of the incarnate moment: the moment, the quick of all change and haste and opposition: the moment, the immediate present, the Now." And this demand could be paraphrased in the words of one of the hymns familiar to him from childhood: "Teach me to live this day as 'twere my last." His tingling awareness of the Now urged him to catch the moment—the very movement of life as it passes; and his prose, rapid, flexible, vibrates with the aliveness of bird, beast, flower—and the consciousness of man. I need not quote to prove this contention; the evidence is at hand in any one of his books and has been sufficiently stressed by every critic of Lawrence; but it may be worth calling attention to the travel books, whose quality is also to be explained in terms of "the moment, the immediate present." His perception of place, of people, is momentary, immediate, and he conveys briefly, yet intensely, as though he literally wrote on the run, the sensation of travelling itself—of the bright succession of scene. Few other travel books succeed so well; and *Twilight in Italy* and *Sea and Sardinia*, to name the first two, are, in the sense I have tried to give the word, accounts of a pilgrimage. They could have been written only by a writer whose principle was "becoming"—by a nonconformist.

The travel books record actual journeys Lawrence made, but the novels themselves draw largely upon his own experiences, too; and Lawrence figures, openly or in disguise, as the hero of many. The result is the temptation to explain the novels in terms of biography. Leavis, for example, calls attention to Lawrence's childless marriage and to his jealousy of Frieda's children by her first husband, to account in part for the pattern marriage assumes in the novels; and the connection cannot be denied. The temptation is singularly strong because so much attention has been paid to Lawrence's biography: too much attention—of the wrong kind. This is largely owing to the way people became involved in his life and, surviving him, felt compelled to laud or denigrate him, for the most part irresponsibly. This gossip—for much of the biographical writing is no more than that—has encouraged an appetite for the man at the expense of his work; and the work has been read for the light it throws on him rather than for its own sake. Such an approach has resulted too often in an interpretation of the work which travesties the revelation Lawrence in fact sought to give. Consequently, it has become imperative that a fresh critical approach to the work, by critics of a younger generation than those who have made Lawrence their property, should be preceded by a clearing away of biographical lumber. Only then, when the man is stood in plain view, shall we be able to pass beyond him to an uninhibited appreciation of his achievement.

Harry T. Moore made an excellent start in 1955, in *The Intelligent Heart*, and now he is followed by Edward Nehls in *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography* (Volume I, 1885–1919). The first view of Nehls's work—the first of three volumes, 614 pages long, indexed, illustrated, annotated—calls out the involuntary ejaculation, "formidable!" His plan is to collect together

everything of biographical value that has been written on Lawrence, and also to track down friends or acquaintances hitherto silent in the hope that their memories may be worth committing to print. The mass of evidence is then connected chronologically and provided with the essential apparatus and copious notes. How can such a scheme, so unmitigated, so ponderous, succeed? But it does succeed, and succeeds brilliantly, with hardly a lapse. Lawrence can be seen more plainly in this book than ever before, and the result is, as might be expected, to take the reader straight back to the work itself, which can now be studied more sympathetically and without the distractions of the past.

The question one is left with after reading the many recent studies of Lawrence is, why should there be such a sudden revival of interest in him and his work? Leavis speaks of himself as "having been engaged in a long battle to win recognition for Lawrence," and it is true that he has been his most constant champion; but he must not be allowed to suggest that Lawrence passed into a period of oblivion immediately after his death, from which he is only just beginning to emerge. A bibliographical examination of the works will refute that assertion; look at the printings of *Women in Love*, not to mention *Sons and Lovers*, between 1930 and 1950; and my own knowledge of my contemporaries' experience of Lawrence during the 'thirties, in a part of England very like the country in which Lawrence grew up, would entirely support the contention that Lawrence has never been left unread. The present interest being shown in Lawrence is, in part, a recognition of the attention he has always received from the serious reader; and he has been attended to because he comments more profoundly than any other imaginative writer of our times on the terrible predicament in which we find ourselves. How can the individual come to life—become himself—in the face of an insentient society, of a society that has rejected life for the machine? His work is an attempt to state the problem and to answer it; and both statement and answer are religious, are in the spirit of his childhood's hymns. Religious—and visionary. As early as 1916, in *Twilight in Italy*, he wrote: "There it lay, vast masses of rough-hewn knowledge, vast masses of machines and appliances, vast masses of ideas and methods, and nothing done with it, only teeming swarms of disintegrated human beings seething and perishing rapidly away amongst it, till it seems as if a world will be left covered with huge ruins, and scored by strange devices of industry, and quite dead, the people disappeared, or swallowed up in the last efforts towards a perfect, selfless, society."

A vision of the Last Day—of our day? Lawrence wanted passionately to avert the disaster he foresaw, and because it is so much more imminent today than when he wrote, we turn to him. We may not admire all that we find, nor agree with the terms in which he chose to express his message, but we shall have to say, as Hazlitt said of Byron: ". . . still there is power; and the power rivets attention and forces admiration. 'He hath a demon:' and that is the next thing to being full of the God."

DOUGLAS GRANT

The following books are considered in this article:

D. H. Lawrence: Selected Literary Criticism, edited by ANTHONY BEAL. London: Wm. Heinemann Ltd. [Toronto: The Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd.]. 1956. Pp. xii, 435. $5.75.

T. S. ELIOT, *On Poetry and Poets*. London: Faber & Faber [Toronto: British Book Service (Canada) Ltd.]. 1957. Pp. xli, 308. $4.25.

F. R. LEAVIS, *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist*. London: Chatto & Windus Ltd. [Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co. Limited]. 1955. Pp. 318. $4.50.

JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY, *Love, Freedom and Society*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd. [Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co. Limited]. 1957. Pp. 253. $3.75.

EDWARD NEHLS, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*. I, *1885–1919*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1957. Pp. xxvi, 614. $7.50.

REVIEWS

Mediaeval Drama in England

As the need for a new comprehensive treatment of the early English drama has been great for some time, the reader will turn with high hopes to Hardin Craig's large and attractively printed monograph, *English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1955, pp. 421, $6.50). The need is great, for the book which has been the undisputed standard work on the subject, E. K. Chambers's *The Mediaeval Stage*, is at least partly out of date. Such a statement can be made without discrediting Chambers's in many ways admirable account, as it appeared no less than fifty years ago, since which time much has been added to our knowledge. Moreover, Chambers's own and more recent survey of the subject in *English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages*, good as it is, is too brief and conservative to replace *The Mediaeval Stage*. As for Karl Young's monumental *Drama of the Mediaeval Church*, the only work that can rival Chambers's in quality and scope, it covers a somewhat different area of the field, being concerned with the early dramatic compositions of the Church throughout Western Europe rather than with later developments in the vernacular. Craig acknowledges a great debt to Young in his early chapters, but the core of his new book deals, like Chambers's, with the vernacular drama of mediaeval England.

The subject of *English Religious Drama* is a vast and complex one demanding unusual scholarship. For such a task, one would think Craig to be one of the very few men sufficiently qualified. In this study he returns to the field of his earlier research (see his edition of *Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays* for the E.E.T.S.), having since become known rather for his books on the Renaissance, and more particularly for his one-volume edition of Shakespeare, one of the best of the century. Yet the great expectations with which one therefore reads *English Religious Drama* are not wholly fulfilled.

I have suggested that the subject of this book is similar to that of *The Mediaeval Stage*. This is not entirely true, for Craig does not discuss folk-drama, to which Chambers devoted his first volume. True to its title, *English Religious Drama* confines itself to liturgical, mystery, miracle, and morality plays. Yet the intimation that the book must be judged with Chambers's work in mind was made purposefully, and even though Craig makes no extravagant claims. Whether small or large, there was undoubtedly some interplay between folk- and religious drama in the Middle Ages, and thus the omission

of any real discussion of folk-drama in the book is a serious matter. The book has yet more serious weaknesses. It reads less well than Chambers's and covers the vast areas of its subject unevenly. Much as there is to admire in some of his chapters, Craig lets the reader down in others. Whoever intends to use his book as an extensive modern survey of the subject must do so with caution.

For some of his errors or inadequacies, Craig certainly deserves our sympathy; for seldom has a scholarly treatment of such scope been more unfortunately timed. It was in the press when Grace Frank's admirable *Mediaeval French Drama* appeared, and Craig was perhaps necessarily ignorant of F. M. Salter's startling discoveries relating to the Chester plays in particular but involving our view of many matters concerning the mediaeval stage as a whole, which he provided in his Alexander lectures (reviewed in April 1956). To cite but one example: on pages 168–70 Craig follows Chambers and others in linking Ranulf Higden, author of the *Polychronicon*, with the Chester plays. He does not believe that Higden was the author—for he generally adopts the sound view that mystery plays are, like ballads, of anonymous origin—but he regards him as a "translator or redactor." Arthur Brown's article concerning Sir John Arneway, the mayor of Chester who has also been linked traditionally with the Chester plays, leads him to modify further Chambers's ingenious argument. How wrongly will appear when one reads Salter: Sir John Arneway was not mayor in 1327–8, the crucial date, and Higden had nothing to do with the Chester plays. But enough of this, for Craig, cruel matter.

Of the book's ten chapters, the opening three present a fairly reliable account of the rise and nature of liturgical drama, and of its gradual transition into vernacular drama. The main tenets are soundly argued. Stress is placed on the conservative institutional character of early religious drama, and on the importance of the breviary as its central source. The fourth chapter deals with the mediaeval stage. Chapters v–ix, with their thorough treatment of the Chester, York, and Wakefield cycles, the remaining mysteries, the few English miracle plays and the moralities, form the natural core of the work. The final chapter discusses the disastrous effect of the reformation on mystery plays, and also some of the subtle connections between late mediaeval and Elizabethan drama.

This last chapter is one of the best; full of sound observations, not the least of which is the one that some of Shakespeare's plays owe a debt to the morality play not only in structure and characterization but also in their tone of moral earnestness. The most original contribution of the book's central section is the discussion of religious drama at Lincoln. Craig assigns the Hegge plays to Lincoln, presenting the best case possible for this claim. It is doubtful whether this problem will ever be solved once for all. Less satisfactory is the account of miracle or saint's plays. As is well known, the text of only three or four of the many English saint's plays has come down to us. This shortage is especially regrettable since, as Manly pointed out, the influence of saint's plays on Elizabethan drama was probably much greater than that of mystery plays. Craig also believes this, yet he discusses the few surviving plays only very briefly; and might he not at least have attempted

an indirect reconstruction of some of the lost miracle plays, on the basis of such known sources as the *Legenda Aurea* and of French or Dutch miracle plays devoted to the same saints? Though requiring great caution, such an attempt surely provides the scholar with a great opportunity to fill out our picture of English miracle plays.

The point I have raised may be open to debate. The same does not apply to the criticism that should be directed at the survey of the mediaeval stage in chapter IV. While this survey includes a lucid treatment of some relevant documents known to us for some time, it is now possible to give a much fuller as well as more accurate account of early actors and methods of staging than is presented here. Salter and others have brought new relevant material to light. But most disappointing of all is the absence of any discussion of mediaeval sculpture and related art forms which provide a wealth of information about the staging of mystery and miracle plays. One looks in vain in Craig's bibliography for a reference to Emile Mâle or Kernodle. G. Cohen's latest work on the mutual reflection of sculpture and drama in France is not mentioned, nor is the impressive article by Hildburgh in *Archaeologica* on alabaster tables in England.

But to end this review on a note of compliment: in his basic terminology Craig wisely follows Young, and not Chambers or Pollard whose inclusion of all mediaeval religious plays other than moralities under the heading of "miracle plays" has been the cause of endless muddle. The plays based on scripture and developing out of the liturgy—including the "cyclic" plays—are here rightly called *mysteries*, just as in France they were called *mystères*, for they were craft-plays (Salter). Only those plays which "treat of the lives and martyrdoms of the saints" (Craig) should be called *miracle plays*. And English *morality plays* differ markedly in kind from the French *moralités* (Craig, pp. 341–3). Will someone now, using Craig's sensible terminology, bring *The Mediaeval Stage* up to date?

F. D. HOENIGER

The Fading Coal

Faced with the traditional problem of the relation between spontaneous invention and voluntary judgment, the poet-critic of the Romantic period is likely to solve it by insisting on their simultaneous activity within the single creative moment. For Coleridge such a moment involves "judgment ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm profound or vehement," and, according to Keats, "my judgment . . . is as active while I am actually writing as my imagination." Indeed (if Woodhouse's note is to be trusted), Keats goes on to decry revision in cold blood. "Shall I afterwards, when my imagination is idle, and the heat in which I wrote has gone off, sit down coldly to criticize when in possession of only one faculty . . . ?"

If such views are taken as a Romantic norm, what are we to think of Shelley's much more analytical and sequential view of the temporal "mind

in creation"? For Shelley the activity of this "fading coal," despite its lofty source (and despite the fact that "the finest passages" cannot be "produced by toil and study"), needs, unfortunately, to be supported by careful observation of the "inspired moments" and even by conventional padding. The poet is forced to recognize "the limitedness of the poetic faculty." Shelley tells Medwin that, although "the source of poetry is native and involuntary," it "requires severe labour in its development." He shows Trelawny a chaotic page covered with the words and images which his heated brain has thrown off and adds: "in the morning, out of this rude sketch as you justly call it, I shall attempt a drawing." He reviews a novel by his friend Hogg and deplores the fact that "the author has written with fervour, but has disdained to revise at leisure."

Remarks like these suggest a good deal about Shelley's poetic nature and how it worked, but without direct evidence they remain suggestive rather than convincing. And, whereas the study of Keats's poetic manuscripts is sufficiently advanced and sufficiently sophisticated to allow us to interpret with some certainty (and perhaps to qualify) what Keats has to say about his own poetic process, Shelley scholarship (despite the printing of a large proportion of Shelley's *disjecta membra* and unrevised drafts) has hardly begun to make a genuinely critical use of the voluminous material available in his twenty-eight notebooks, most of which are now in the Bodleian Collection. It is surely remarkable that Neville Rogers's study (*Shelley at Work*, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1956, pp. 356, $5.25), a preliminary and tentative charting of the world of those notebooks, should at this date seem as illuminating and even epoch-making as it does. The second half of Rogers's book tries to show how such poems as "To a Skylark," "Ode to the West Wind," *Epipsychidion* and *Adonais* grew out of the most wide-ranging and ultimately unrecognizable sources. Although Rogers leaves the final products much as he found them, he certainly makes clear the variety and weight of the material which was pressing from all sides on Shelley's major poems, and the extraordinary intellectual energy and discipline that was needed to order and select from it, so that, as Roger Ingpen remarked twenty years ago: "A page of manuscript may be so heavily corrected as to yield but a single perfect line." To read Rogers's chapter "Shelley and the West Wind" is to give substance and definition to what Shelley himself told Medwin and Trelawny.

The first half of the book traces through the labyrinths of the notebooks a series of ideas and symbols fundamental to Shelley's poetry: the New Birth, Intellectual Beauty, Virtue and Power, Boats and Isles, the Dome, the Veil, the Cave, the Dream. The presiding genius (or, as some might prefer, the monster) at the centre of Shelley's labyrinth is Plato. Rogers's method of presentation is also labyrinthine. He picks up threads and drops them, he turns pages at random, he darts off at a tangent, he turns back on himself. The reader soon gets used to such characteristic transitions as the following: "But to return from our détour"; "It is time to return from our Platonic trail"; "As we come round once again to the *Symposium*"; "So much . . . for the interpretation of Demogorgon's answer"; "So much for Shelley's Platonic synthesis in this speech of *Prometheus Unbound*"; "We

have come round, yet again, to *Prometheus Unbound*." For all the interest of the journey, the reader is likely to wonder why a book on Shelley's creative process as revealed in his notebooks should insist on being little more than an elaborate notebook itself.

Along with the lack of articulation in the progress of Rogers's argument goes a lack of discrimination in the handling of his key concepts and images. No doubt the ultimate world of the One is all-embracing, and in the end everything may in fact turn out to be equivalent to everything else. But the closer we approach that far off, divine event, the more improbable will literary criticism become. In the meantime it is surely a mistake for Rogers to identify Mont Blanc and Intellectual Beauty and the West Wind, or to mix indiscriminately the quest in "Alastor" with the quest in *Epipsychidion* (to mention only two of such easy fusions). Most striking of all, in his desire to demonstrate that *Hellas* and *Adonais* "may be regarded as the arrowhead of a pointer of which the rest is formed by the whole of Shelley's preceding philosophy," he distorts the end of *Hellas* almost beyond recognition, turning the victory cry of the Turks into (apparently) a Greek triumphal hymn, and the remarkably mixed feelings of the final chorus into "radiant joy." Moreover, his eagerness to trace in the development of Shelley's poetry the triumph of Platonism makes him see Plato everywhere, and such writers as Godwin and Hume nowhere (or, alternatively, as chains to be burst). Rogers pays tribute to American scholarship in his Preface, and he is obviously indebted to those enthusiastic Platonic critics Carl Grabo and J. A. Notopoulos. But a serious look at the work of such un-Platonic Shelleyans as K. N. Cameron and C. E. Pulos might have been equally helpful. Rogers might even have been led to ask whether the Platonism of *Adonais* is as unmixed a blessing as he seems to think.

It is no doubt a fault for even a pioneering "critical enquiry" to be so amorphous and arbitrary. But to expect something remarkably sharp and definitive is to mistake the kind of thing that Rogers is trying to do. He explains in the Preface that *Shelley at Work* is a by-product and an interruption of his labours classifying the contents of the notebooks and preparing to revise the "Oxford Shelley." And it is as an interim report, a display of half-arranged and half-identified wares that his book deserves mainly to be judged. As such it is often fresh and stimulating. The passage which best shows what Rogers can do with his interlocking materials is perhaps the long discussion (pp. 134–46) of the Promethean cave. But he is equally interesting (if less convincing) on the cave of Demogorgon. Most students of Shelley are likely to find this book disappointing in a number of ways, but few are likely to put it down unrewarded.

MILTON WILSON

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